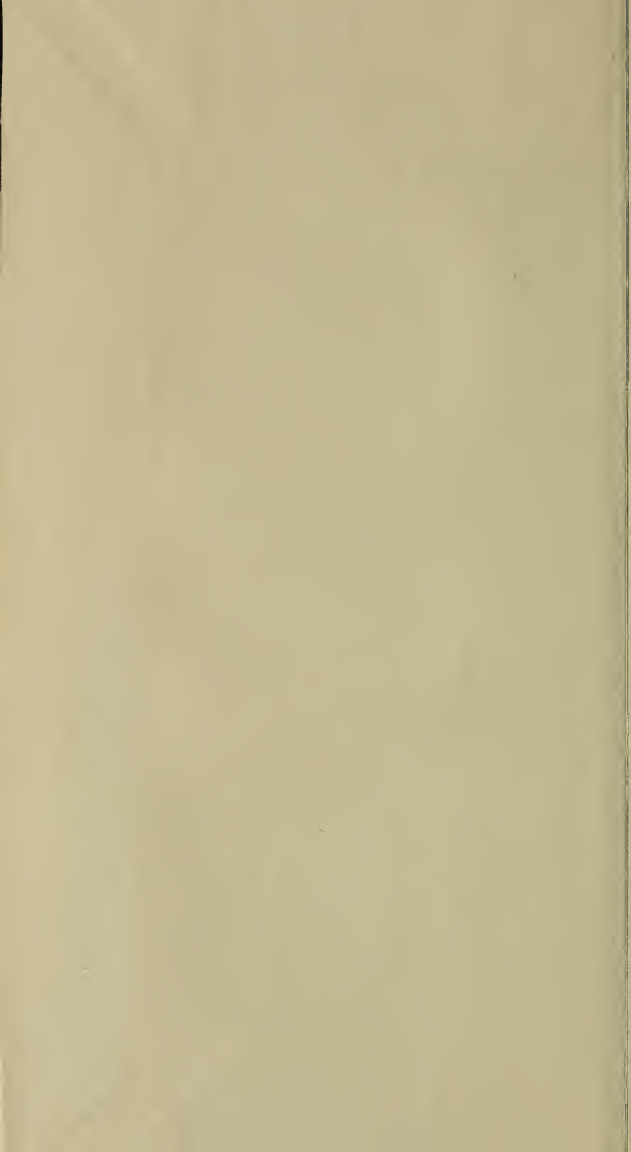




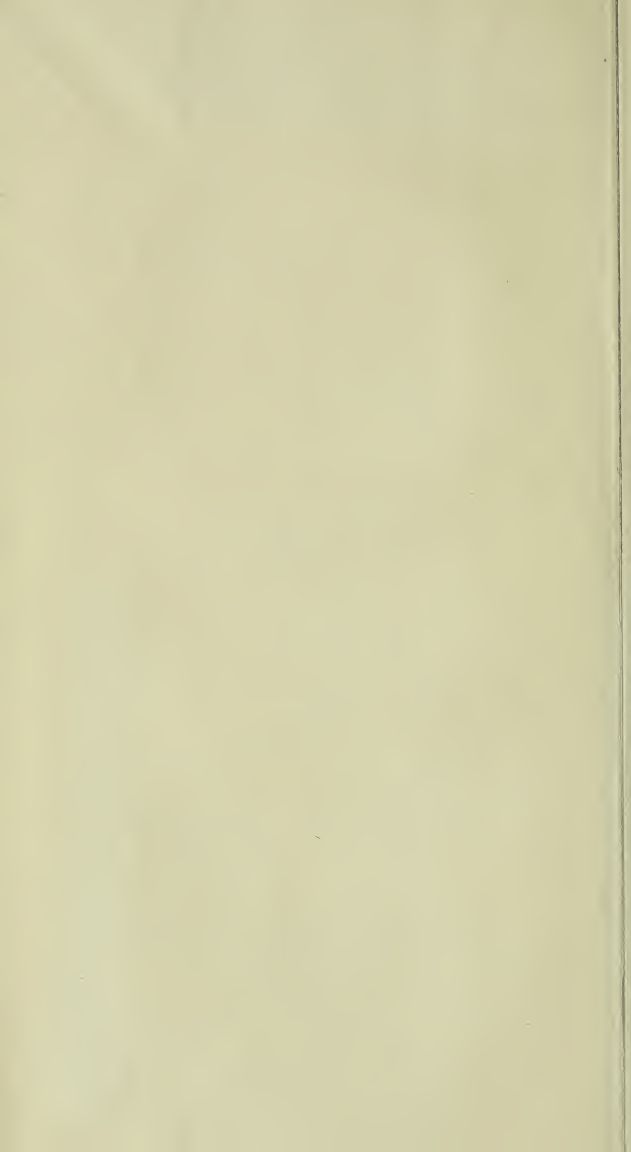
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THE
MAN OF FASHION ;
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THE

MAN OF FASHION ;

OF

THE
MAN OF FASHION ;

A Tale

OF

MODERN TIMES.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

BY THE LATE
MISS GUNNING.

LONDON:

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TO BEAUTY, INNOCENCE, AND TRUTH :

TO

HER ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE

PRINCESS CHARLOTTE OF WALES.

This Volume is humbly inscribed,

BY

THE DAUGHTER OF THE

LATE LIEUT.-GENERAL GUNNING,

AND

THE NIECE OF THE LATE DUCHESS OF ARGYLE,

AND COUNTESS OF COVENTRY.



PLATE I

Fig. 1. A. B. C. D. E. F. G. H. I. J. K. L. M. N. O. P. Q. R. S. T. U. V. W. X. Y. Z.

Fig. 2. A. B. C. D. E. F. G. H. I. J. K. L. M. N. O. P. Q. R. S. T. U. V. W. X. Y. Z.

Fig. 3. A. B. C. D. E. F. G. H. I. J. K. L. M. N. O. P. Q. R. S. T. U. V. W. X. Y. Z.

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Fig. 5. A. B. C. D. E. F. G. H. I. J. K. L. M. N. O. P. Q. R. S. T. U. V. W. X. Y. Z.

Fig. 6. A. B. C. D. E. F. G. H. I. J. K. L. M. N. O. P. Q. R. S. T. U. V. W. X. Y. Z.

Fig. 7. A. B. C. D. E. F. G. H. I. J. K. L. M. N. O. P. Q. R. S. T. U. V. W. X. Y. Z.

Fig. 8. A. B. C. D. E. F. G. H. I. J. K. L. M. N. O. P. Q. R. S. T. U. V. W. X. Y. Z.

Fig. 9. A. B. C. D. E. F. G. H. I. J. K. L. M. N. O. P. Q. R. S. T. U. V. W. X. Y. Z.

Fig. 10. A. B. C. D. E. F. G. H. I. J. K. L. M. N. O. P. Q. R. S. T. U. V. W. X. Y. Z.

THE
FABLE OF THE TREES,

INSCRIBED TO

HER ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE

PRINCESS CHARLOTTE OF WALES.

ONCE on a time when great Sir Oak,
Held all the trees beneath his yoke ;
The Monarch, anxious to maintain,
In peaceful state his sylvan reign,

Saw, to his sorrow and distraction,
His subject trees take root in faction;
And tho' late joined in *union* hearty,
Now branching into shoots of party.
Each sturdy stick of factious wood,
Stood stiff and stout for public good;
For patriots ever, 'tis well known,
Seek others' welfare, not their own;
And all they undertake, you know,
Is meant *pro bono publico*.

The hardy Fir from Northern earth,
Who took its name and drew its birth,
The Oak placed next him to support
His government, and grace his court.
The Fir, of an uncommon size,
Rear'd his tall head unto the skies;
O'er-topped his fellow plants, his height
Who view'd, and sicken'd at the sight,

With envy ev'ry fibre swell'd,
While in them the proud sap rebell'd.
“ Shall then,” they cried, “ the Ash, the Elm,
The Beech, no longer rule the helm ?
What ! shall the ignoble Fir, a plant
In tempest born, and nurs'd in want,
From the black regions of the North,
And native famine issue forth,
In this our happier soil take root,
And dare our birth-right to dispute ?”
On this the fatal storm began,
Confusion thro' the forest ran ?
Mischief in each *dark shade* was brewing,
And all betoken'd general ruin ;
While each to make their party good,
Brib'd the vile Shrubs and Underwood.
And now the Bramble, and the Thistle,
Sent forth ode, essay, and epistle,

To which anon with equal mettle ;
Replied the Thorn and Stinging Nettle !
What's to be done ? or how oppose,
The storm which in the forest rose ?
Grief shook the mighty monarch's mind,
And his sighs labour'd in the wind.
At length, the tumult, strife, and quarrel,
Alarming the sagacious Laurel,
His mind unto the king he broke,
And thus addressed him : “ Heart of Oak !
Sedition is on foot, make ready ;
And fix your empire firm and steady,
Faction in vain shall shake the wood,
While *you* pursue the general good.
Fear not a foe, trust not a friend,
Upon yourself alone depend.
If not too partially allied,
By fear or love to either side,

In vain shall jarring factions strive,
Cabals in vain dark plots contrive.
Slave to no foe, dupe to no minion,
Maintain an equal just dominion.
So shall *you* stand by storms unbroke,
And all revere the Royal Oak."

THE
MAN OF FASHION.

THERE is no axiom more indisputable than that life is a sea of trouble as well as pleasure ; every individual experiences it more or less, and my own history will evidently prove the truth of the assertion. In relating the caprices of fortune that I have experienced, I shall carefully avoid all long digressions, by commenting upon the vicissitudes of human life, as they tend to interrupt the story, destroy the chain of events, and contribute but in a small degree to

the entertainment of the judicious reader, whom I shall leave to make such reflections as the various incidents of my history may suggest. I shall commence my short memoir with the death-bed of an affectionate, yet erring mother, to whose blind indulgence I attribute much of my numerous errors through life. “My son,” said this indulgent parent, “I now before my eyes behold as in one monstrous picture, that my life has been one scene of vanity, to the exclusion of all the duties that make existence valuable, and memory praise-worthy. Delaval,” said she, “I have failed in all the duties that essentially constitute the mother : that second life which I ought to have given you, by infusing into your tender mind, from the moment when I first took you to my breast, that reverence and love for truth and virtue, which is the only safe guide for our actions, and the only means to insure our everlasting happi-

ness, I neglected to breathe into you. Better had it been that I had not bestowed on you that natural life, which, without the second, is the heaviest of calamities. What, my dear son, have I seen as the fruits of that mistaken education you received from your misguided parents?—A mother should always speak the truth to her child, and a death-bed has at all times the privilege of speaking plainly to all around: let not my son, therefore, be offended with his dying mother!—What have I seen in your conduct? Do you think that your excess at the gaming-table, followed by the death of your victim, passed out of my recollection, without a sigh given to the unfortunate family, without a tear shed over my son? No, Delaval; in the depth of my own dissipation, I blushed for you, wept for your infatuation!

“ But how do you suppose the fatal

train of events in the family of the worthy Osmond was ever to forsake my imagination ? Let me not add error to error ; let me not hide this awful fact from you ! I have so lamented that *real tragedy*, that I have ever since but carried about me a burdensome and languishing life. My affection, which is great for you,” and she lifted her feeble head to kiss my cheek, “ shut up this secret in my own bosom—the more indeed to wound its peace ; but now the *truth alone* shews my love for you—the truth from a parent, and a *dying parent*, may still save the son ! Perhaps the immediate cause of my death, but assuredly the sharpest of its stings, is Delaval’s *seduction* of Mrs. Osmond—Delaval’s *murder* of her injured husband !”

The Countess of Clarendon felt the cold pale hand I held wet with my tears : she understood too by my audible sobs that her words were daggers to my

heart, which at that awful moment was replete with filial tenderness. Ah! sacred fire of nature, it is not even dissipation that can wholly extinguish thy embers! How often have I found nature kindling in my heart, when all other powers of virtue were cold and silent within me!

“Not unhappy, not hopeless,” she continued with pious fervour, “will be my death, if it has the power to renovate my son! Oh, those scalding tears! how do I prize them, what comfort do they bring to my fainting soul! Hallowed drops, sacred breath of sorrow, welcome, welcome to this my last scene of life!” My dying mother turned her face from me, becoming me to be silent, I comprehended the state of her feelings and the condition of her exhausted and suffering frame, and therefore withdrew to a window of her dressing-room. I heard

her faint voice in prayer ; her breath became thicker ; I heard her groan ; I suppressed my own with reverential awe : but in a few moments she called me again to the sofa on which her still beautiful and faded form rested, and said with a relieved voice : “ my joy was too great for my strength, and ended in an excess of grief : for ah ! while I joyed for the present, my very joy reminded me but too powerfully of the past ; but now, my son, your mother has more serenity of hope : it is for you alone, to shed a balm on my pillow as I expire. Could I behold the film removed from your eyes ; could I know that you will despise a *frivolous world*, to which your parents, yourself, with thousands of others, immolate all the sincere joys of life ; could I feel that you will take the example of this my death-bed, for the instruction I *should* have given you in youth, the pang of death would be

stilled; and hope, that precious boon of heaven, would not be denied me.

“ You have a child,” she wept bitterly — “ Ah henceforth watch over its education: be you *its instructor, its director*; and, my son, begin the first preparation for your new and sacred task, by the study of those virtues you must afterwards teach your children. If thou dost grant me this, oh, my God, whom I have so deeply offended, I receive it at thy hands as a blessing the greatest thou canst bestow, except the pardon of my manifold offences, and of that it shall be the sure and gracious forerunner!” Finding the object of her care silent, she faintly said, “ My son, you do not comfort me !”

“ Ah,” I cried, “ your words are too heavy on my soul ! but be therefore comforted, my mother ; they will bring joy and not sorrow hereafter.”

“ I am comforted, dearest son,” she said, and reposed for some minutes ; after which she took my hand, and I said, “ forgive, oh forgive, my mother, all my unkindness to you !”

She raised herself and closely pressed me to her bosom ; her eyes brightened with the last glimmer of life, and her features were covered with a faint smile.

“ Supreme of Beings, deign to accept of my repentance,” she said, “ although late and little for my offences, do thou, *all powerful*, heal its defects, and pardon those with all the rest !—Oh God ! thou art mercy !”

She had clasped her hands during this prayer. A moment after she hastily (as if she would not be surprised by death, without *one* more token of love for her unworthy son) held out her

hand, and made an effort to raise herself; but her strength was gone, she fell back, and expired with these words for her last legacy:—

“Farewell, my son! Remember—”
Seeing the paleness of death on her once lovely features, I called her women from an adjoining room: they employed all means that might recal life; but her soul had gone to appear before that God whose mercy she had implored, and I do trust anticipated.

The lessons I received from a dying parent, whom from infancy I tenderly loved, notwithstanding my dissipated habits, appeared at the moment to be of a character that could not be effaced, even by the finer charms of pleasure; and this mother had herself been the sacrifice of that hardness of heart, the pleasures of the world too fatally engender. I gave to my mother's memory the un-

affected tears and sorrows of a heart that truly felt her loss ; after which, as my reader will hereafter discover, I was not the less incorrigible, not the less carried away by the stream of fashion and folly. Alas ! I too soon forgot the last and strongest of my mother's dying words.

I shall not bestow many words on the history of my parentage.— Suffice it to say, my family had been long ennobled, and were endowed with those liberal gifts of fortune, which, in despite of all our reasoning, impose so imperiously on the judgment of the multitude. The earl and countess bore a most respectable character : they were, however, the slaves of a fashionable life, and passed their whole time in the tumult of what are called *amusements*, and the pursuit of what *they dignified* with the name of happiness.

The father of the unhappy Delaval,

with many amiable, and even estimable qualities, led a life of dissipation. His mother, on her part in early life, content that no stain could be cast upon her *honour*, abandoned herself to the tide of fashion, and like her associates, gave her moments to every thing *but reflection*. The essential duties of a mother she never comprehended till too late: their important place was filled up with caresses lavished on her child, when she could snatch a moment from delusive pleasures; and for the affectionate duties of a wife, she substituted a perfect politeness in all her conduct to her husband.

Such, in few words, were the situation and manners of these fashionable parents. I was the first, and only fruit of their union: they loved me unfeignedly; but their affection was a passion that centered in themselves,

and the *sacred trust of my education* was abandoned to the care of hirelings.

The first sounds that dwelt on my ear, were those of adulation. I was incessantly told of my own rank, and the immense possessions to which I was heir: no one dared to use even the *tone* of authority with me; all my fantasies were respected, all the humours of my little lordship gratified: a nurse, who was *merely* suspected of having made me shed a tear, was dismissed, even without being indulged with a hearing.

To common observers childhood presents nothing important. Ah, how much is the character of infancy mistaken by such! To susceptible and sagacious minds, how interesting is that little being who mimics, represents, and is growing into *man*; who even

before speech is lent to him, exhibits the passions that will one day dangerously agitate him in the great world.

At the hour when I was permitted to visit my parents, I seized the occasion to draw down their displeasure upon any of the attendants who in the course of the day might have taken the liberty to check my arrogance ; for, to speak of me as I really was, I played the part in all its mature caprice of a *spoiled child*. The earl, but more especially my mother, assiduously nurtured this perverse and selfish disposition, the source perhaps of all the crimes and misfortunes of my life.

I was taught to repeat prayers I certainly did not understand, and no idea that was within my comprehension was given me of the *Supreme Being*. How far better would it have been, if at this tender age, and before my mind was

sufficiently matured to receive the sublime subjects my instructors obtruded on me, they had addressed me with the following words, the purport of which the infant heart readily apprehends :—*respect the unfortunate ; if any one asks your aid in want, divide your portion with him, and when this wretched fellow-creature returns you thanks, ah, how much will you experience that benevolence bestows happiness ! how much will you perceive, that it is more flattering to the heart than all other enjoyments !*

But my heart was never cultivated. Hourly did I hear of the elegance of my person, and the vivacity of my manners ; but no one thought of fostering the happy disposition I might occasionally display. I was received by all the visitors at Clarendon House with monotonous and extravagant compliments on exterior, but heard not *one word* that might incline my disposition to virtuous habits : I

was, therefore, more solicitous to form a captivating exterior, than to enrich my mind by study, and elevate my character to that which truly constitutes *man*, and justifies his pretensions to superiority over other animals. Then, my too indulgent parents often lavished rewards on me that I was far from meriting, and again punished me in the same spirit. But although I was sometimes thus corrected, I was always their idol. Hatred of labour and study, and the passion of amusing myself, were indulged with the most wanton excess. My mother one day said to my tutor, who complained to her ladyship of my neglect of study,—“the son of the Earl of Clarendon, sir, was not born to learn Latin.”

That was a *lesson* I never forgot. I was *then* twelve years old: from that time I gave myself wholly to the pleasures belonging to my years; the earl

and countess contenting themselves with observing that *the world is a better school than the closet*, and that society would soon teach me more than all the *libraries* in the universe.

At length, corrupted by a multitude of false principles, or, I may perhaps rather say, corrupted with evil dispositions, for the want of all solid and virtuous principles, I quitted childhood for youth ; for that *epoch* in which the first step generally determines the career the man shall run, and casts the lot of his happiness or misery for life.

At an age when parents, attentive to the real advantage of an only son, would have endeavoured to keep him in the pursuit of those acquirements which would have formed his heart, and ripened his judgment, I was constantly the companion of my misjudging and too partial mother, who could not prevail

on herself to lose my society for a length of time sufficient to enable me to make the tour of Europe, which at that period was considered so essentially necessary for the finishing of a young man of my rank and expectations; though at sixteen my bosom glowed at the prospect of escaping from that slight degree of domestic restraint, the silly fondness of my parents alone made necessary. My figure was manly for my age, and my passions were even at that early age vehement and decided. Although not destitute of an ambition to excel in useful or splendid acquirements, yet from childhood, I impatiently fled from study, in whatever form it presented itself to my acquaintance. The gentleman who bore the name of my tutor, though in reality, from the moment I was placed under his care, I was his complete director, and a splendid assemblage of the most able masters in the various sciences, failed of that success which might have

been predicted from the gifts with which nature had abundantly furnished me. My masters seeing the impossibility of prevailing on me to do any thing but what was most agreeable to my own inclination, contented themselves with receiving their salaries, and making a favourable report to their employers of my various improvements ; and were, in reality, little anxious, little capable to excite in an impetuous boy a love of labour, as the means of excellence.

The Earl and Countess of Clarendon made not many enquiries into the success of my instructors : content with knowing they were retained for the express purpose of attending me at stated hours, they were careless as to my progress in the higher arts ; but great was their eagerness to observe my acquirements in riding, dancing, drawing, and all that distinguishes the modern man of fashion,—whom we must take

care not to confound with that inestimable being, who worthily bears the name of man.

Such was the unfortunate line of conduct, such the fatal error of my parents in the line of education : had my mind been occupied with useful studies, I should at least have been less the prey of that idleness of temper, that corrupts with rapid pace, and might have escaped the more gross temptations of fashion. It was their duty to guard my youthful steps with address ; but they left me to the mere direction of my own will, and thrust me without reserve into the vortex of society.

I became intimate with several young men of my own age and rank ; many of whom, indeed, had drunk deeper of the stream of corruption than I had : and the absurdities of a young man of fashion,

rather than any grosser vice, were as yet what distinguished my name.

I did not long remain in this equivocal state : the fascinating Mrs. Alwine was distinguished by my mother with marks of peculiar complacency ; she was lively, full of ready wit, of the most fascinating manners, and extremely lovely, although she had reached that age when beauty loses part of its lustre.

Mrs. Alwine from having had the entrée of Clarendon House from the time of my childhood, even at the age of eighteen appeared on all occasions to treat me with the familiarity she had been accustomed to in my years of infancy ; and would during her visits to the Countess never cease to tell her ladyship how much she partook of her felicity in the improvements of Lord

Delaval's fine figure and various accomplishments. Of my moral qualities (and I yet possessed dispositions that might have reversed the character I have to display) this Circe never spoke; these were far enough distant from her thoughts: person, rank and extreme youth had captivated her senses, and were the true objects of her attentions and flattery. I soon began to feel the power of her sparkling eyes, which spoke but too plainly to me in the most seducing language; but I had not yet lost that timidity which so reluctantly quits youth, and is its sweetest embellishment. I was fearful of risking an avowal to the wife of an honourable man, who was the friend of my parents. I could not leap over the bounds of a respect that, in truth, fanned the flame that was now fiercely burning in my heart. Timid love is always the most dangerous. I could perceive that the emotions of a vehement and decided

attachment, did not escape the observation of the artful Alwine, who had for years indulged in all the pleasure of sense, and at the same time had contrived to support in society that degree of character, which still gave her a welcome entrance into the first houses in London, notwithstanding wives who prized the possession of their husbands' affections, and prudent mothers, shunned a society dangerous to their own peace and the morals of their children.

I will not take upon me to express the increasing delirium of my new situation. I was the slave of the various emotions of my soul: suffice it to say, I became the lover, the happy lover of the enchanting Caroline, and had nothing left on earth to desire.

Mrs. Alwine was practised in the arts of intrigue: ours was covered with an impenetrable veil. She suc-

cessfully contrived occasions of our meeting. My mother did not suspect my error; my attentions to the woman she called her friend, she attributed to that politeness which she had incessantly inculcated above all to the fair sex, whom she considered as a species of divinity, the proper objects of men's adoration.

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The time came when the eyes of the mistaken countess were to be opened. Notwithstanding all our precautions, she found a letter Caroline had written to her son, which was by no means equivocal in its meaning. Mrs. Alwine received the bitterest reproaches from her ladyship: she was unmoved, and coolly answered, "My dear madam, where have you lived thus long, to take such an affair seriously? Many mothers would thank me for the trouble I have taken with the young viscount. A boy is not to be turned loose upon the world,

without any knowledge of what it is formed ; and believe me, madam, a little *innocent love* is a safe barrier against the corruption into which your son might otherwise have plunged. The world acknowledges Lord Delaval to be a most amiable youth ; and I repeat to your ladyship, that I would guard his heart against the snares of others : for at his age the necessity of an object in which to place its affections, is the most important of wants. You would not surely, my dear madam, make a misanthrope of your son ; and I have, from friendship for his family, as well as regard for the youth, occupied his heart, to shut out many greater dangers.”

This extraordinary language did not impose on my mother, who had the good sense and resolution to break off all intercourse with this dangerous new instructress, notwithstanding her own inconsiderate manners, and her too great

attachments to the follies of the world, I was beginning to grow weary of this little affair, and therefore yielded with a good grace to act my part in the family rupture, and returned with redoubled pleasure to my intercourse with the gay and frivolous of my own sex and age. If I read, and sometimes I did for the want of better amusement, it was immoral or useless books; the same thoughtlessness governed this, as all my other actions. I made no reflections on what passed around me, and gathered no solid ideas either from my reading or my observation; but I uniformly filled the poor and monotonous part of what is called a fine dashing young man, a Bond-street loungeur of the first water.

The errors of my parents in education were not all negative: the maxim, the example my father taught me was, that a man of high rank, designed for the *very first* circles of society, would be

ridiculous if he did not know how to hold cards and dice in his hands; and in truth I soon became an adept in every species of gaming.

It may well be supposed, that those by whom I was surrounded, did not fail to impress on my mind the necessity of jealously guarding what men have conspired falsely to distinguish by the name of *honour*. I was so carefully educated in the science of fencing, that I felt myself assured of killing my adversary the first quarrel I should have upon my hands. Assiduously was it impressed on my feelings, that if the dearest of my friends was betrayed into the imprudence of giving offence I must kill him, or fall myself, although he were to plead inebriety, or the transitory error of a sudden passion. But I was never instructed that my honour was really wounded, not by what another man does, but by one's own

actions. I was never informed that honour would be *really* outraged, if I seduced a wife,—above all, the wife of my friend; I was not instructed that honour consists only in the zealous discharge of our duties: in a word, my tutors omitted to describe honour to me as then only perfect, when it performs the sacred and essential duties of husband, father, and friend, in an irreproachable manner.

I was enamoured of the character of a wit and satirist: the darts of calumny were dexterously thrown from my hand upon the most grave and virtuous characters: I soon became celebrated for the brilliancy of my remarks; and so dear was this fame to my vanity, that I doubt not, I would have ridiculed my nearest relatives to have sustained the brilliant reputation of a wit.

Such is the fatal effect of the passion

of attracting the eyes of the world ; but unhappy is he who has need of the false tastes of society to enjoy his own existence !

It was not long before I acquired another vicious habit, the source of great mischief to others, and of infinite mortification, if not of moral turpitude, in its victim : I speak of the habit of contracting debts, with little attention to the means of discharging them. The Earl of Clarendon, in allowing money for the pleasures of his son, did not calculate for the *many* in which he indulged ; and, alas ! I had to reflect with anguish, at a late period of life, that among them all, open or concealed, I could not reckon that of relieving the unfortunate.

The heart of youth is corrupted by vile, although fashionable maxims, incessantly sounding in their ears : the

picture of the unfortunate is never suffered to intrude into the first company, lest it should affect the spirits of the happy circle, and cast a shade over their enjoyments. Unlucky is the man of fashion who introduces the subject of the private misfortunes of a family before his gay companions: if a little feeling is still lurking in his heart, soon will he be taught, by their reception and looks, to banish the unwelcome guest. Thus is the inexperienced mind gradually hardened to that indifference and blindness to the necessities of its fellow creatures, that marks the character of the great world: for one that preserves the *ingenuousness of pity* in the midst of the contagion, how many are blighted by the epidemical disease of society!

For my part, for many years of my life, all my self-love, my ambition, my pretensions, had no other aim than to constitute me a *worthy member* of that

society, which, developed with a masterly pencil, could be no other than the detestation of the good, and ought to be the object of universal proscription.

My parents were delighted at the progress I made in all the fashionable embellishments of the day, and enjoyed the most sincere gratification in hearing my name mentioned as the leader of fashion, and the criterion by which other young men were eager to establish their conduct and manners: in short, I was considered the blazing comet of fashionable society. Lord Delaval's dress, Lord Delaval's carriages, and the Lord Delaval's deportment, was the standard by which all who wished to make a proper figure in the circles of ton, regulated their actions. I lived in a constant whirl of pleasure, without affording time for one moment of serious reflection; and seldom visited my too indulgent parents, but when their drawing-

room was the scene of splendid amusements, or my purse stood in need of being replenished by a draft on the earl's banker; which, notwithstanding a separate establishment of three thousand per annum, I had often recourse to: but the vain parent did not remonstrate, while he received the most lively pleasure in seeing his son figure in the multiplied shades of that being that is named a *man of the world*: in truth, I gave eminent promise of playing that *personage* in the end with no little distinction.

Mrs. Alwine was not the only woman with whom I indulged my talents for gallantry: indeed, there was scarcely any celebrated for beauty, who was not the object of my pretensions; and my vain infatuated mother did not a little applaud herself for possessing a son who, at his first entrance into the world, enjoyed such brilliant success. These

insipid follies I will not retrace ; they but served to expose the absurdity of the character I then played, which I thought the most desirable and amiable : suffice it to say, I soon precipitated myself into all the various modes of pleasure, and if possible became even more corrupt than my companions, since I had the art of making vice appear amiable. This is assuredly the most dangerous circumstance to a youth. When gratified vanity is added to the natural motives of pleasure, how difficult is it for him to measure back his steps from^l his wanderings ; and how many are the young men who would never have rushed so far into the career of vice, if it had not given them a species of fame in the world ! I had been some months of age, when my parents, anxious to have grand-children to inherit their honours, now seriously began to think of providing a suitable match for their hopeful son ; but my heart,

ever on the search for new objects of passion, now selected one who was indeed graced with a thousand charms, all of which were crowned with simplicity of manners, and the transparent candour of the most innocent soul. How deep is the impression which personal charms make on the heart, when enhanced by a lovely mind! Augusta Villers appeared in person and character something above all that I had seen of beauty or accomplishments. She was distantly related to Lady Clarendon, and the only child of a man of incalculable worth, whose high military reputation stood in the place (as sometimes happens) even with the world, of that nobility which was wanting to his name: he possessed a property, indeed far inferior to my pretensions, but sufficient for the fortunate man who has the happy art of moderating his wishes, and regulating his wants; who is content with the medium be-

tween a humiliating poverty and offensive luxury, and is satisfied with the real benefits of a sound judgment, a healthy body, and a virtuous life.

In a few words I have given the portrait of a man, such as sometimes, though too rarely, is formed in the midst of a corrupt world.

Colonel Villers was quick to perceive the sentiment with which his daughter might be said to have surprised my soul. Till then, this sentiment, so delicate, so distant from what is usually termed love, and so seldom known to the libertine, was an absolute stranger even to my apprehension. Certainly no woman, however fascinating for the moment, had ever afforded me the slightest foresight of its existence. How is a passion for a worthy object degraded, in being confounded with the depraved affections of the senses !

Villers had then discovered my sudden attachment to his adored Augusta, and one day addressed me thus: "I have to reproach myself, my lord, for having too long been silent on a subject that so deeply concerns me. I will not conceal that I feel I have fallen into a very great error; an error that a father can hardly pardon himself: I ought not to have permitted the visits with which you have so lately frequently honoured me. He who has a daughter, lovely and amiable as is my Augusta, cannot be too attentive to the nature of the friendships he permits her to form. You are young, my dear lord, and my child is not without attractions: these are sufficient reasons for me to deny myself the pleasure of receiving you here. I have the honour, it is true, to be allied to your mother; but I cannot flatter myself that your parents will ever consent to your union with my daughter. I speak of the impossibility of such an *union*,

my lord, because I know you cannot have entertained *other* views, in the marked attentions with which you have honoured Augusta." I interrupted Colonel Villers with the vehemence so natural to my nature. "No, sir, never! I will not dissemble that I love your daughter; that I passionately adore her; but my intentions are to make her mine by the most honourable and sacred of human ties; and that to call my lovely cousin by the endearing name of wife, is the only object of my ambition, and the aim of all my wishes."

The worthy parent of Augusta, at the same time that he seemed pleased at the energy with which I expressed my affection for his beloved child, gave me to understand, in the most unequivocal terms, that he would not longer continue my visits in Grosvenor-street, unless sanctioned by the entire and decided approbation of the Earl and

Countess of Clarendon, which it was his opinion, would never be obtained to a marriage so inferior in point of rank and fortune, to their ambition, and the views, it was well known, they had formed of uniting me to one of the first heiresses England could boast.

Eager to possess the beautiful object of my present pursuit, who I well knew was in every respect far removed from the possibility of being mine in any but the most honourable manner; and from the blind indulgence I had ever experienced from my misjudging parents, I had no doubt but the moment I made known to them the object I had selected to become my wife, they would open their arms to receive the daughter I thought fit to honour by my selection, I lost no time in going to my mother, in the most perfect confidence she would immediately adopt my sentiments; and quitted Colonel Villers's house, car-

ried away by my ardent passion, and the illusions of hope, which at no period of life quits the human breast : it is a plant ever in vegetation, and springs afresh after every rude blast has destroyed its budding charms.

The countess was dressing for court, when with all the earnestness of passion I besought her to dismiss her attendants, and grant me a few moments private conversation. Astonished at the agitation my countenance expressed, she immediately complied with my request, and in the most persuasive manner, I gave her to understand that the future felicity of my life depended on the consent of my father and herself, to a union with the all fascinating Augusta Villers.

My mother scarcely permitted me to conclude. " You are come, Delaval," she said, " very opportunely. I have to beg

your attention to a project which is no doubt of much greater importance than the childish nonsense with which your head is at present filled. In fact, my dear son," she continued, "every thing is fixed for your marriage with Miss Dormer: you know she is extremely handsome, very amiable, and is at present the richest heiress in this country; so that as the two families are mutually agreed, there can be no doubt of the choice being agreeable to you. In this connection all is united that can be desired: above all, two great advantages that cannot be too highly appreciated,—the alliance to an old and noble family who want money, and a most splendid fortune without any drawback but the want of ancestors."

It is impossible to describe my sensations at that moment, and with all the energy of a boy in love, I spoke of my passion for my fair relation, which I

at the moment supposed nothing on earth could have the power to extinguish.

“ It is plain,” said my mother, interrupting me with much displeasure, “ that you are a foolish boy without experience, who listens only to the violence of momentary passion. Marriage, child, is a state that requires the deepest reflection. Listen to me,” she continued, seeing that I was about to speak : “ I am inclined to believe Augusta Villers is all that your heated imagination pictures ; I well know that she possesses graces and accomplishments formed to please ; but let us look beyond these : her family has nothing noble to boast, but a distant relationship with mine ; and does it become the future Earl of Clarendon to marry in any other rank than what is suitable to his own, unless he acquires wealth by it ? Consider, my dear Delaval, all the advantages

of riches, and then answer me.—Would you ally yourself to a woman without fortune? Believe me fortune is the most essential requisite in forming a matrimonial alliance. Your wife must bring you a portion at least equivalent to the fortune you will inherit. Miss Dormer will have immense possessions at the decease of her father, who has agreed to give her, on her becoming Lady Delaval, one hundred thousand pounds. Recollect that you have a higher rank to sustain; that your father loves to keep his money, as well as you do to throw it away; and that you must not be lowered in the eyes of the world, by being spoken of as a young man, who is wasting his estate before he comes into possession of it. Why should I tell you that it is opulence that commands the respect of the world? Virtues, beauty, talents, the most exalted merit, even nobility itself, are useless in poverty; and poverty is always the neighbour of humiliation, if not of con-

tempt. The man of small fortune, even if he were a prince, rarely obtains consideration in the world; he is barely endowed with the finest qualities. Do not, therefore, deceive yourself, through the influence of a blind passion: man is nothing in society without wealth to give him consideration and power.

“ I have spoken plainly to you,” she continued: “ it is impossible you should mean to disgrace your family; you cannot intend to expose your father and me to the mortification of failing in our engagement. You cannot offer the insult to Lord Dormer to reject his daughter, who I am this day to take to court. Your marriage is irrevocably fixed, and in a few weeks it must be solemnized. To-morrow you will meet them here at dinner, as all is finally arranged between the families. You must, my dear Delaval, renounce this foolish partiality: there is no longer

room for deliberation ; you must obey the earl, or sustain his indignation, which nothing can avert."

The avaricious mother ordered her chair, to which, a prey to a variety of reflections, I silently handed her, and mounting my horse, I took a solitary ride, to reflect, without interruption, on the embarrassments of my present situation, which was rendered doubly distressing, by having incurred debts to a large amount, which I well knew, my father, from the nature of them, would not assist me to discharge, having already paid large sums, which he had warned me should be the last. Distracted between love and avarice, how was I to decide ? I could not bear the idea of deceiving Colonel Villers, so powerfully for the moment had a pure passion corrected my ill-habits. I suffered inexpressible anguish as I proceeded to his house ; but at *that time* I did

not add to my sufferings the sting of remorse for falsehood to Augusta, or her respectable father. Ah, parents! will ye never reflect on the crimes of which ye sow the plentiful seed, when ye drag your children to the altar of a reluctant marriage. On my way to Grosvenor-street, I resolved to restrain my feelings, and set her I really loved the example of fortitude; for I had too surely perceived that my passion was far from displeasing to her. I entered the house, more dead than alive. My feelings were ever in the extreme, and the struggle I had determined on, was almost convulsive: I could not articulate a word. With a kind of desperate resolution, I at length stated the resolution of the earl. Colonel Villers was scarcely less agitated than myself: Augusta 'was his sole treasure in existence. "My dear lord," he said, with a tone of affectionate solemnity, "I am the most blameable of fathers;

I am also the most to be pitied. Oh, sweet Augusta! thy father ought to have protected thee from this! What right had I to suffer you to receive so long the visits of so fascinating a young man; but whatever you both suffer, you must have the consolation,—the one to advise obedience to your parents, the other to obey. Your error, my lord, is small in this unhappy affair: do not add a greater, that of crushing the well-formed hopes of your noble parents. I alone am culpable: leave me to my punishment.” At this moment the door of the library opened, and Augusta entered: she saw the agitation of both our countenances; and on her father relating the cause with all the firmness he could summon to his aid, Augusta heard him with the calmness resulting from a quick sense of duty. “Our parents are entitled to our obedience: be as happy, my lord, as you deserve to be, by your dutiful conduct.” She

then quitted the room, to conceal the tear and sobs she could not repress. The worthy afflicted father remained some time to console my sorrow, while his own feelings were but too apparent. At last I took an affectionate leave ; and, impelled by the pressing demands of an extortionate Jew, for money lent on exorbitant interest, I gave myself a sacrifice to the will of my father ; and on the appointed day, was presented in form to Miss Dormer, and received with a polite indifference, that gave no promise of happiness in the projected union. How great the contrast, I thought, during the silence in which the most part of my first visit passed, between this woman, and the fascinating innocent Augusta !

The father of the selected bride was formerly an army contractor, and lately created an Irish peer. By dealing out shoes, boots, pantaloons, and gaiters,

he had accumulated an immense fortune, which he invested in such a manner as secured him strong parliamentary influence ; and having for several years servilely devoted himself to the measures of ministers, he at the critical period of the union, succeeded in obtaining the title he then bore. Vain of his newly acquired dignity, he exhibited on every occasion his heraldic honours blazoned with innumerable quarterings ; and a coronet, twice as large as that of any other peer, stared one out of countenance, not only on his carriage and his plate, but likewise on his chairs, his linen, his snuff-boxes, his secretares, his carts, and even *his wheel-barrows*. The Right Honourable Lord Dormer, &c. &c. written with his own hand, had headed every charitable contribution since his elevation to the peerage ; and it has been well observed, that in him, nobility, like the wand of the magician, has converted the soul of an

usurer and a miser, into that of a philanthropist. As he owes his fortune and his rank to the war and the ministers, he was the clamorous advocate of both : he had discovered innumerable beauties in corruption, and declared things never could be better than they then were : he was president of a society established for the purpose of detecting what were called Jacobins ; a term applied, without distinction, to all who dared to doubt the wisdom of the measures pursued by the then government ; and while his colleagues build criminal charges on anonymous information, the noble lord did not disdain to act as a kind of honorary spy in the service of his employers : he was also a member of the house of commons, a banker, and a colonel of volunteers. In the first of these characters he serves ministers by his vote, and injures them by his speeches ; in the second, he turned his political connections

to private advantage, by obtaining a considerable share of the annual loan ; and in the last he enjoyed the privilege of giving cockades to his servants, wearing occasionally at St. James's a splendid uniform, and talking among his former equals of all the pomp, pride, and circumstance of *glorious war*. He had at the time of my introduction to his family, just lost his only son on the continent, who was as ridiculous an animal as any within the pages of the *red book*. After having been some years a clerk in his father's office, he had bought a commission in one of the regiments of foot-guards, and with the title of honourable prefixed to his name, *called himself* a man of fashion ; but his vulgar English, his pert manner, and his frequent mention of his father's wealth, betrayed his origin ; and he was at once the laughing-stock of the *mess-room*, the food of the *caricature shops*, and the prey of the

gaming-houses. Of the female part of this *noble* family I shall speak presently ; but it is proper I should also mention the manner by which the Earl and Countess of Clarendon became induced to seek an alliance for their only son with persons, between whom and those who owe their rank and honours to the service which they or their ancestors have rendered to their country, and such as have lately been raised to an unnatural pinnacle of grandeur, by the blind favours of fortune, by ungentlemanly presents, or criminal speculations ; but in these days, London owes all its charming dissipation to the *new* world. Without the *dumplings* of the city, the *yaw-yaws* of the West Indies, and the *nabobs* of the East, we should have no entertainments worth attending ; for except the balls which the newly hatched peers give in order to display their coroneted plate, old nobility

affords nothing but vegetable sandwiches, sour lemonade, sponge biscuits, and soda water.

Lord Clarendon had a first cousin, the daughter of a deceased Scotch earl, who begun her career in life with high birth, a small fortune, and a deformed person: these united circumstances kept her unmarried, and after the death of her father, she lived with different relations, who received her by turns as a visitor in their families; but by degrees she contrived to disgust them all. For some she had exposed, by relating the little foibles which she had discovered in their character; others were tired with her eternal chatter, and not a few ceased to send the usual invitations, on account of the impertinent liberties which she presumed to give herself, in meddling with their domestic arrangements. Nearly banished from the houses of her relations, she had

since placed her principal dependance on the support of new acquaintances, which she made it her study to collect : for this purpose, she therefore visited all the different watering-places, particularly Bath : there, assisted by her known intimacy with persons of fashion, and her title, which gives her the appearance of a person of consequence, she ingratiates herself into the notice of rich citizens, Creoles, and Asiatics. Flattered by the attention of a woman of quality, they anxiously cultivated the intimacy ; and while they have the satisfaction of talking in their humbler circles of their dear friend, Lady Jane Macpherson, she is rewarded for her condescension, by the use of their *splendid carriages*, and by frequent invitations to dinners, balls, and suppers. Anxious to continue so honourable an alliance, her new associates next humbly solicit to be favoured with her ladyship's card in London ; and when they

found that she had no regular place of residence, her *many* friends and relatives in town disputing the pleasure of her company, which she divides as equally as possible among them, to avoid jealousies, or apparent preference, they become clamorous in their entreaties for the honour of being included in the number of those on whom she destines to bestow some portion of her time the following season.

When in consequence of these solicitations, she deigns at last to visit these plebeian friends, additional servants, new carriages, and splendid liveries, are prepared for her ladyship's reception. She next is requested to consider their houses as her own, and to invite whatever persons she chooses to their assemblies. She soon objects to the vulgarity of the visitors of her host, with whom it is impossible for her right honourable connections to associate. The hint is

taken, and before she has passed a month at the town residence of one of these ladies, she gets all the advantages of an establishment of her own, at the expence of her entertainers, unincumbered by the former associates of her new acquaintance.

I have spoken in the plural number, because she had appeared in London with eight or ten families, whose names and situations in life were totally unknown at their arrival, before she had engaged to usher into *good* company the family of Lord Dormer ; but under the fostering protection of Lady Jane, their houses had soon become the grand depôts of fashionable follies. Having for some time carried on this newly invented traffic, to which was added an occasional match between the heiress of some *such friend*, and the needy son of some *noble lord*, who paid her ladyship handsomely for the arrangement,

she had gained the name of the *purveyor general* : as, for *proper pecuniary considerations*, she provided the music, the decorations, the supper, and the company of those entertainments, which constitute the attractions, for which persons of the highest rank condescend to exchange the honour of their acquaintance. This provident lady had at all times the entrée of Clarendon House ; and having fixed herself for some months on the splendid establishment of the new made peer, it entered her prolific brain, that the next male representative of its honours being now numbered with the dead, the fair heiress of upwards of twenty thousand pounds a year would be no despicable acquisition to the house of Clarendon : with this view, she made a point of introducing the earl and countess, at an intended ball, to be given the evening on which the really pretty heiress was presented at St. James's ; and Lady Jane having described her dear

present intimates in the most glowing colours, and painted the charms and the wealth of their fair daughter in the most flaming style, Lord and Lady Clarendon agreed to go to Berkeley-square on the appointed night; where, as Lady Jane declared, they would find none but the *best company*, she having taken on herself to order the supper, and invite *all* the guests. I was of course included in the invitation, but being out of town for a day or two, my parents consented to take this opportunity of being introduced to the person they thought worthy the honour of being one day the future Countess of Clarendon, though sprung from so mean an origin: But such metamorphoses have within these few years been so frequent, that they no longer excite any observation; and there was little doubt the assemblies of Lady Dormer would soon be described at length in the daily newspapers, accompanied by

a long list of her guests, presenting, in heraldic order, all the peers and peeresses of the united kingdoms.

In the invitation given by Lady Jane Macpherson, for the honour of the presence of the Earl and Countess of Clarendon, at the ball of her exalted friends, her ladyship had assured them they would meet only *good company*. Let us now stop and enquire what is meant by *that phrase*, a phrase peculiar to modern language, undefined in *any* dictionary, and yet for ever in the mouth of European grandees. "Good company" is an expression used on the Continent, in a sense far more intelligible than that in which we so often meet with it in England. With our neighbours it *did not* describe the virtuous, the pious, the clever, or the well informed; but simply that order of persons who can boast of a *long* line of ancestors, unpolluted by trade. With us *what does it signify?*

Not an association of meritorious individuals, for the most *profligate characters* are often distinguished members of “*good company* ;” not an union of genius, wit, and knowledge, for such qualities are by no means peculiar to the fraternity ; *not* the ancient nobility and gentry of England, for while some of the unassuming representatives of our best houses scarcely find their way into the circles of high life, *low upstarts, gamblers, usurers, money-brokers, and government contractors*, rival the proudest of our nobility, and claim a distinguished place in this *much-envied community* ; not a meeting of gentlemen and ladies distinguished for the polished elegance of their manners, for coarseness, rudeness, and vulgarity are often the characteristics of those who are still allowed to be “*very good company*.”

What, then, are the attributes which entitle their possessors to the enjoyment

of these exclusive privileges which belong to this favoured class ?

Those born in an elevated situation have some advantages which may lead to this pinnacle of grandeur ; but these advantages are lost if accompanied by a mistaken amiability of disposition.

The rich and the noble are by hereditary right admissible members of the society ; but they forfeit their prerogatives by deviating in any respect from the laws of the fraternity, or by contracting intimacies with such as are not in the number of the initiated ; while the very lowest of the people may aspire to the honours of the community, if by meanness, adulation, or pecuniary services, they find the means of conciliating the popular chiefs of this tribe, who willingly bestow the title of “ good company ” on those who in any way administer to their pleasures, and

tamely obey their mandates. Lady Dormer was of this description : this new candidate for grandeur was tolerated at court, and had obtained the privilege of giving galas to a host of *good company*, who while they laughed at her vulgarity, received her with smiles, and readily accepted her invitations, as her suppers were excellent ; and one met at her house, under the active services of Lady Jane, *every body that one knew*. By this sketch of the meaning of the phrase “good company,” my readers will observe *I mean this privileged class, and not persons remarkable for any moral virtue or intellectual quality*. Lady Clarendon, with all the aristocratic pride of high birth and exalted rank, had ever carefully avoided this kind of *second sort* of nobility, and invariably had declined all invitations or approaches on their part ; and in deviating on this occasion from her general rule, she was solely actuated by the desire to procure for her son an immense

fortune with the woman on whom he was to confer the honours of his family : and it was not from her I obtained any account of this evening's gala, or of my intended relatives ; as from her knowledge of the great wealth of Lord Dormer, she had in her own mind determined that her son should not escape a *contract* with this great *government contractor* ; but some of the particulars of their first introduction with this hopeful set, I got from a young man who had been invited by Lady Jane to partake of the hospitalities of Lord Dormer's dinner-table ; and the remainder of the events of the evening, I overheard the countess relate to a friend of hers, with whom she was amusing herself at the vulgarity of those, with whom, however, she had determined to form a close alliance by engrafting their silly daughter on her own noble stock.

The impatience of Lord and Lady

Clarendon kept them on the tip-toe of expectation, till the appointed evening when they intended honouring the new made peer with their presence in Berkeley-square. They were surprised, in approaching the door, to perceive no carriages ; and having entered the house, they were ushered into a splendid suite of apartments, which were as yet unoccupied : they were left some minutes alone, when a servant brought a message to his lordship, requesting his presence in the dining-parlour, and apologizing to the countess for the absence of his lady and Lady Jane Mackintosh, who, he said, were but just retired from the dinner-table, and were now at their toilet. The earl hesitated, drew out his watch, and observed to the countess that it only wanted a quarter of eleven o'clock, suggesting at the same time some disapprobation at the strange reception they had met ; and adding a sort of half-expressed wish to

return home, without any further introduction to persons, who it was evident did not know how to receive with common propriety, the visits of those persons of rank, who honoured them with their presence at their puppet-show exhibitions, of the folly and ignorance of which he had already had a sufficient specimen. The countess expressed a wish to see more of this curious set; and that it was too early for any kind of dinner-party to break up. Overcome by these persuasions, Lord Clarendon followed the servant to the dining-room: his manner was formal and stately, to a degree, at all times; in entering, he bowed at a distance, and apologizing to the person who rose to receive him, did so in a way which conveyed that, instead of making, he had a right to expect excuses.—The gentleman who gave me the particulars of this curious visit, declared he thought he could not

contain himself from expressing the effect the earl's astonished countenance had on him. When the little fat lord, with a carbuncled face, long nose, and flaxen crop wig, jumped up from his chair on his lordship's name being announced ; and shaking his hand, with all the familiarity of long intimacy, cried out, " Very glad to see you, my lord ; not the less welcome, because unexpected.—Suppose one of her ladyship's friends : I think the servant said the Earl of *somebody*"—" Of Clarendon," exclaimed the earl, bowing, with haughty surprise.

" Aye, aye," continued his noble host, " that *was* the name. I beg you a thousand pardons ; but really so many great folks have lately requested the honour to know me, that it is impossible to remember all their titles : hope we shall be better acquainted, my lord. Here,

Jones, bring some fresh Burgundy. Pray fill your glass, my lord, and make yourself at home."

Lord Clarendon, not less disgusted with the manners, than irritated by the familiarity of his entertainers, sat down in dignified silence, refusing the Burgundy which was placed before him.

"Come, come," said Lord Dormer, filling his glass to the brim; "Push the bottle round, my lord, and be not afraid of the wine. I *imported* it *myself*, and know there is no better to be found in the city of London."

"I have no doubt of its excellence," said the astonished earl; "but must beg leave to decline taking any wine, having dined some hours."

"How's that, my lord?" His lord-

ship stared. “ Lady Jane says nobody dines in this part of the town before nine o’clock, and it is now only eleven :— in two hours time it is impossible to finish one’s bottle, which I would not give up, you’ll excuse me, for all the earldoms in his majesty’s gift.”

Some of the motley crew who formed Lord Dormer’s party, joined in the loud laugh with which this speech was concluded. His lordship, rising with solemnity, said, “ I did not come hither, my lord, to interrupt your mirth ; but as I have no relish for this sort of jollity, I will, if you please, join the ladies.”

The party was awed into humility, by the dignity with which these words were uttered ; and the master of the house changing his tone, entreated the earl, in the most submissive terms, to

pardon what he called his little joke, which fell from him in the fulness of his heart, and meant no harm to any one.

The earl received his apology, and again took his seat. "To tell your lordship the truth," continued Lord Dormer, "Lady Jane wanted me not to give a dinner on the ball-day; but it is my wedding-day, and I have had a jolly party on the occasion, every year since our marriage: so being unwilling to abandon the good old custom, now I can so well afford it, I carried my point. But her ladyship made me promise that none of *my own* friends should *go up stairs*, but I am resolved they shall. *My* lady has ceased to visit all her old city acquaintance, but I have privately sent them cards of invitation in *her name*; and besides the lords and ladies, dukes and duchesses, who are to be introduced to her to-night, she will, to her great surprise and mortification, find half the

corporation of London, with their wives, sisters, and daughters assembled at her ball."

Even the gravity of the cold-blooded earl could not help smiling at this trick ; but as he did not feel inclined to partake of the conversation of Lord Dormer's table, having bowed to the master of the house, with no less formality than he had displayed at his entrance, he withdrew from the mixed party he had seen below. The earl conjectured that the female society which was assembled above stairs, would be equally objectionable to the countess : he was, therefore, greatly surprised at seeing in the assembly which was now collected, many persons of the highest rank and distinction of both sexes ; though, in consequence of the trick played by the lord of the mansion, these were mixed in heterogeneous confusion with others of the lowest stamp and most vulgar

appearance. Peers, ambassadors, and ministers of state, were jostled by pampered citizens, tawney Creoles, and bedizened Asiatics: here the delicate form of a Bond-street loungeur came in contact with the weighty protuberance of a well-fed alderman; and a woman of fashion, whose losses at the gaming-table had compelled her to borrow money of a rich Jew, found herself so surrounded by his wife and daughters, that she could not avoid displaying to the world her acquaintance with the Hebrew tribe. Ladies who had lately soared into the region of high life, heard in loud whispers the criticisms and rebukes of their discarded friends, who were now at their elbow; and haughty dowagers, who made it the business of their lives to avoid plebeian society, were condemned to breathe the same air with a horde of nobodies.

In short, nothing could be more gro-

tesque than the motley crowd which the indefatigable zeal of Lady Jane, and the *privately smuggled* invitations of the master of the house had drawn together : the whispers which sounded on all sides were various, but all equally distressing to the parties concerned. “ Good God, did one ever see such a mixture of company ? Really the heat is intolerable. I shall take care another time how I trust Lady Jane Mackintosh, and her new made rubbish.” Such complaints were general ; while a noble lord offering his arm to the Countess of Clarendon, said in the hearing of Lady Dormer, “ Allow me, dear madam, to convey you through this *ocean of queries*. I cannot conceive how these *new made people* have contrived to collect so many strange figures. I thought my acquaintance was tolerably large, but *’pon honour* I am bewildered in this *fog of vulgarity*.” “ I fear your ladyship,” cried Lady Jane, as she forced her way through

the throng, “ will think I have brought you into a very improper company ; but I hope you will acquit me of all blame, when I assure you that the creatures have come *uninvited*. How they have presumed to take such a liberty, I cannot conjecture. When I ventured to ask your company, there was nobody on the list, but persons of the highest ton : I assure you I made it an express condition with the *woman of the house*, that not one of her friends should be invited ; nor would I allow an exception to the rule, even in the case of her own brother’s wife. After taking all these *proper* precautions, you will allow it is provoking to be so imposed on !”

Lady Clarendon, who would, on any other occasion, where interest was not concerned, have highly resented the insult of mingling in such a heterogeneous society, now deigned to listen to this

apology, and turning away said, “ indeed, Lady Jane, *it is a great take in.*”

Lady Dormer, whom her noble protectress now accused of sending invitations unknown to her, protested with great truth she knew nothing of the matter, and that she was not less mortified than herself, at seeing so many of her former associates.

Lady Jane would not give credit to her ladyship's assurances ; and declaring that her imprudence would greatly injure the entrée of her fair daughter into the *first world*, as well as hurt her, Lady Jane's, reputation with her own circle of friends, she walked off in anger ; and then with smiles, compliments, and apologies, endeavoured to put the fashionable part of the company in good humour, declaring, in the presence of

the less distinguished guests, that the *nobodies* had no other right to be at the ball than that which their own impudence afforded them.

Lady Clarendon waited more than a quarter of an hour before the lady of the house and her noble governess, Lady Jane, made their appearance, and she was introduced to a tall raw-boned wrinkled dame, whose advanced period of life was vainly endeavoured to be concealed by the youthful manner in which she was dressed: the fair intended bride next made her appearance, and from the beauty of her figure, and the lady-like composure of her manner, the countess thought she might fill the dignified station she had in her own mind allotted her with some decency. Though Lady Jane stayed by Lady Dormer the greater part of the evening, and was repeatedly heard desiring her to be quiet, she could not resist the inclination she felt to be

bustling about. At one time she ordered fresh coals to be added to the fires; at another moment apologized for the heat of the room; asked young ladies to play at cards, and gouty dowagers to dance; talked to younger brothers of landed property, to old maids of children, and to fashionable wives of conjugal felicity; scolded the servants for not handing about refreshments in sufficient abundance; and insisted on brandy being mixed with the lemonade, and taken after the ices, observing that without this precaution it was only fit to give the cholic.

But all these mortifications were trifling, when Lady Jane observed, on entering the supper-rooms, that Lord Dormer had displayed *his whims*. Among the elegant ornaments, *epergnes, devices, plateaux et jardins*, she had caused to be prepared in the highest style of fashion, were mixed large sirloins of roasted beef,

boiled turkeys, plumb-puddings, and boars-heads, which his lordship had secretly added ; by whose contrivance also large bowls of punch were placed alternately on the tables, with bottles of claret, burgundy, and champagne. As soon as Lady Jane perceived these strange deviations from her arrangement, she attempted to remedy the evil ; but the attendants, in removing the offensive articles, increased the embarrassment : the liquor was thrown over the dresses of the ladies, and the large joints of meat greased, as they were carried out, the coats of the beaux.

However, notwithstanding the vulgarity of the parents, the Earl and Countess of Clarendon left Berkeley-square, determined to honour the pretty heiress with the title of daughter ; and shortly after every thing was agreed between the transcendently happy Lord Dormer, and the haughty earl to secure for

his son an alliance, where a large fortune was the *sole* inducement for such a connection.

The person of Miss Dormer, to say the truth, was the most perfectly elevated, and the most refinedly turned of all personal forms. Her features too, were of a symmetry, that said to all criticism, take exception if you can ; but then her eyes were but too faithfully the interpreters of her spirits—they were not of the *gentle* cast : they were, *I* confess, the brightest of all luminaries ; but then their fire was rather consuming than enlivening, and on the whole she affected me as the opposite end of a steel magnet, which has all the powers of repulsion, without the virtues of attraction.

She regarded me with an attention not unfavourable to a lover, and sought in my eyes for that admiration and asto-

nishment with which she concluded her presence must have struck me; but her inquiries returned to her with very cold intelligence.

This fair maid had from infancy ruled, with a despotic authority, over her silly father and all his affairs: so that from the day of her birth, she had never been contradicted or controlled; and since the death of her brother, his weak fondness was almost turned into idolatry—a refinement of art, a studied and profound coquetry; a great share of affectation; certain superficial graces, that are seen, but not felt; an air of exterior dignity, which soon freezes the influence that youth scarcely fails to inspire; in a word, the absence of nature, the total absence of nature, made up the portrait of the woman I had promised to marry. But I contemplated my fate with a sullen indifference, that allowed me no time to

dwell on the defects of my future wife. Her father gave, in his vulgar way, the most gracious and cordial reception, promising he would double the marriage portion of his daughter, on the birth of her first son. As soon as the splendid preparations for the nuptials could be completed, the ceremony was celebrated, and I became the envied husband of an heiress, whose alliance had been sought for by almost all the young men of high rank and ruined fortunes about town. Miss Dormer, brought up from childhood with the idea of her own consequence, swollen with pride at the prospect of being one day Countess of Clarendon, scarcely deigned to cast a thought on any thing but her noble descent, and immense possessions. There was as little sincerity in the vows my bride made at the altar, as in those made on the part of the bridegroom. Excessive pomp, and boundless dissipa-

tion were the objects of the youthful wife, as they had been of the devoted husband; and it may be believed I was not tardy in falling again into the stream of corruption. I sought, indeed, to lose myself in that state of stupefaction, which is produced by the giddy round of pleasures. Augusta had accompanied Colonel Villers to Ireland, where he was appointed to a high military command, and her image sometimes resumed its empire in my soul; and at these moments society faded in my eyes, or *rather* betrayed its genuine and odious hue. But I plunged anew into the tide; my life was one delirium; all the duties of man were neglected by me. Content as I was with the companions of my folly, merely to assume the mask of those duties, as far as the manners of the world required the appearance, every moment of my life proved that fortune is not happiness.— Fortune brings none of the blessings of

love; but I refined upon all manner of splendour and licentiousness; my wife was but the too faithful companion, not of my hours, but of my rage for ostentatious appearances. The dress and equipages of Lord and Lady Delaval, their magnificent houses, their boundless expences, were the envy of London: and this base coin I took in exchange for happiness. Cards and dice were ever in my hands, every base passion in my heart: the demon of voluptuousness demanded from me new and larger sacrifices; and large, indeed, were the sacrifices I made of honour, virtue, and happiness.

Among the numerous visitors who crowded our gay mansion, was a young man of extraordinary worth, whom a family connection had thrown into our society: he was married to a lovely, amiable young woman, and the father of a numerous family. One day he

begged a few moments private conversation with me, which I did not hesitate to grant. "My dear friend," he said, "I have been imprudent enough to lend all the little ready money I had, to relieve the urgent distress of a brother, who at this moment is unable to repay any part of the debt he has incurred; my wife is lying-in, and I am unexpectedly called on to pay some money, which if I fail to do, I am threatened with an arrest, which at such a moment would be of fatal consequences to my poor Maria. You, my lord, are rich; and the loan of two hundred pounds will save me and my family from *immediate* distress: the friendship in which we have lived, induce me to ask this favour, and to expect it from your generosity; and I will give you a draft on my agent to receive the amount, at the expiration of three or four months."

I with all the address of polished life,

replied, " I should be charmed, my dear fellow ; it would give me infinite pleasure, if I could be of service to you in any thing ; but at present my situation forbids me that pleasure ; for I have not really at this moment a guinea at my disposal : I am, however, sincerely interested in your difficulties, and wish I could relieve them."

It was thus I discharged my duty, the duty to succour the friend I professed to regard.

The refusal had scarcely passed my lips, when my steward entered for three hundred guineas he was to pay a milliner, for Lady Delaval ; and I, without hesitation, went to my desk, and counted out the amount. " Darnley," I said, to the friend who had solicited my aid, " You see how I am pressed, and debts, you know, must be discharged." " And is not kindness to a distressed friend, a

debt?" retorted he: "but, at least, my lord, I will not be reduced to blush a second time before you."

He abruptly left the house, and never after returned to my society, though I sent repeated invitations to do so.

This little anecdote may appear uninteresting to those who expect only to meet with wonderful or romantic adventures; but mine are the real scenes of life: I delineate them, that others may be warned from such errors, and may perceive how the heart gradually hardens in the midst of dissipation.

My fortune, though scarcely two years married, had been considerably impaired by my want of success at the gaming-table, where I was a constant visitor, and my silly profusion in every article of extravagance, when the birth

of a son brought me a fresh supply, as Lord Dormer kept his word, presenting me the sum he promised, whenever this event should take place. My first child had disappointed my hopes, and my lovely little girl was received most ungraciously by her ill-judging parents, who scarcely saw her cherub face for months together, but contented themselves with the daily return of health of the infant Jemima, as her nurse thought proper to make it : —the paternal character was least of all things understood by them.

The conduct of Lady Delaval was generally indifferent to me, who had never loved, never esteemed her : nor had even friendship been the growth of our union ; but notwithstanding her levity of conduct after I became a father, I was also jealous for the honour of her who bore my name, and the title of mother to the child, who must one day

inherit the honours of my family. Lady Delaval perceived my suspicions, for my passions were on all occasions too much master of me to be veiled with success. She with that degree of easy indifference with which she had ever treated me, took an opportunity, when accident found us together, to address herself to me in the following terms :

“ My lord, I have sought an opportunity for many days past to come to an explanation with you, necessary to both our peace. Do not deny that you are grown a little jealous : be sincere. Can you think that frenzy suitable to you ? Let us view matters rightly : we are not childishly enamoured of each other, and jealousy would be perfectly ridiculous in us. Between those stupid married people, who *pretend* to love each other, the thing is pardonable ; but we are people of the world, and have been as tranquil as any man and

wife in London. Be honest, dear Delaval, and tell me (for I think I may fairly ask the question) what are your pretensions, to exact a tenderness on my part, that you never deigned to bestow on me? You cannot suppose me so stupid as to be ignorant of your numerous amours? You have never even entertained the ambition of saving appearances, and surely do not affect the reputation of a *faithful* husband. The world resounds with the fame of your *successful gallantry* : and, my lord," she said, assuming a solemn tone, " I might perhaps think myself justified in an imitation of your triumphs, if I looked no further than what regards your lordship ; but, Delaval, I consider what is due to myself, to my family, and my children.

" It is true, you are not quite the object to gain my love ! No, my lord ; it is myself in fact that I love : therefore,

I visit and receive company ; spare no expence for my whims ; am enchanted, at the opera, to draw every man of fashion to my box, and to see even my rivals acknowledge, by those looks that a woman of discernment never mistakes, the superiority of my taste in dress, and my happy art of attracting admiration. I delight, it is true, to draw round me the male butterflies of the day ; but my coquetry (I know I am charged with that fault) proceeded no further, and for my own sake it is, that no one can reproach me beyond the folly I have described : therefore, my lord, let your vanity be far enough removed from love of me ; let your vanity banish even the shadow of your doubts. Are you contented, Delaval, with this explanation ? My conduct costs me nothing, but a little of my own money.—I will not assume the style of a wife. I brought you a fortune, and you cannot deny me any of the privi-

leges my money bargained for, when you took it: and now I hope I have said enough for your repose, as far as that depends on my prudence."

This conversation, had I not been degraded from the character of a man, would have stung me to the soul; but though a little wounded by the scornful manner of my wife, I sat down contented that she had not dishonoured me; and happy in being freed from the torture of jealousy, I sought no further benefit from reproaches that ought to have recalled me from my wanderings. Indeed I cared so little for the person of Lady Delaval, that I lost no time in assuring her I was perfectly contented with the explanation she had given, and in future feel perfectly secure in the pledge she had given me, that however appearances may puzzle me, I should rest satisfied that no shadow of dishonour would ever attach itself to the character

of my wife; and after a few polite speeches on each side, we separated on the best possible terms with each other.

The Countess of Clarendon had not slackened in her passionate pursuit of pleasure, although her advanced years and fading form began to admonish her, she must ere long quit the scene of her enjoyments, however reluctantly. Yet, inveterate as was yet her own disease, she could not regard my situation with indifference: she frequently now strove to awaken me to some sense of my folly, and with no little force presented to my reflections the prospect of health, name, a fortune ruined by my infatuation. But her advice was thrown away:—if it made me look within myself, it was only for a moment to return with increasing violence to my criminal pursuits. And how was it possible my mother could expect me now to be healed of a desperate malady, which she had too success-

fully cherished in my youth ? How could she suppose that words would avail any thing, falling from lips, which had never till too late opened, but to flatter my vanity ? From a mother, who had never shewn, in her own family, the loveliness and peace of a domestic life ; and, to crown all, had given me a wife, as incapable of reclaiming me by her example as herself.

Some years had passed, and the idea of Augusta was nearly banished from my mind, when one morning as I was sauntering down Bond-street, I observed a beautiful young woman get out of a very well appointed carriage, at the door of a fashionable milliner. Her veil covered her face, but the elegance of her figure struck me at once as strongly resembling that of my once-loved Augusta : she was handed from her carriage by a gentleman, who appeared to be her husband by the anxiety and tenderness

with which he lifted a lovely child, of which they seemed the mutual parents, from her arms, and carried it himself to the house. A sensation, for which at the moment I could not account, induced me to follow them into the shop; and the lace veil having been removed, while in the act of making some purchases, I once more beheld the beautiful face of Augusta Villers: with trembling agitation I instantly addressed her, and was received with that smiling welcome, that sweet composure, which spoke the happy state of a mind at ease. After mutual inquiries for each other's family, she in the most graceful manner, introduced her happy husband and lovely infant to my notice. Mr. Osmond was a man of elegant address and large fortune: he had beheld the sweet Augusta, sought her hand, and won the consent of Colonel Villers, who was happy to place his idolized child under the protection of

a man so every way calculated to form the happiness of a being so amiable, so formed for domestic felicity. From this interview, the intercourse of the families was renewed. The countess and Lady Delaval visited Mrs. Osmond, with the freedom of relations who wish to be on terms of the strictest intimacy; and her husband sought my friendship with avidity; for much of my depravity was hid from the world, and my conversation and manners had a great deal of that charm which is so acceptable to society. He was a man of great worth in his own character, and of peculiar felicity in his family: his wife was now more interesting, and lovely, than when I had so tenderly loved her, because she was a wife and mother, and a mother that seemed expressly designed to rear a happy family. Augusta was not one of those women whose charms are all borrowed, and who possess no feature of character to distinguish them from

each other : all that Mrs. Osmond was, she was from her own feeling heart : her duty as a child, her tenderness as a mother, her affection as a wife, were *her own*, by their mode of expression ; and never was human being so fascinating as Augusta, when beheld either as a mother or a wife.

Admiration was the passion that seized upon my soul, after the renewal of friendship with this incomparable woman ; but it was an admiration of so mixed and dangerous a nature ! I know not what insanity betrayed Osmond into the desire of an intimacy with a man of such notoriety : His wife was, indeed, an object, however lovely, that few men would have marked for seduction ; since from her unassuming modesty, presumption must have died in its birth, in almost every breast, but such as vice had insensibly made mine ; and the happy Osmond had no little

right to be content with the conduct of his angelic wife ; but she was an inestimable jewel, that the husband should have preserved artfully from such eyes as mine : particularly, as with all the sweet innocence of her character, she had told him the former light in which we had regarded each other. My passion had only been lulled asleep by absence and the world ; but when I saw her again, and was called on, by the forms of society, to felicitate Mr. Osmond on his rare fortune, in the possession of such a woman, I felt but too severely how much I wished to make that enviable fortune mine ; and now that could not be, my feeling, which had till then been the dictate of a virtuous passion, took another turn, and I felt its emotions with more violence than I had ever before experienced. My feelings were not, however, so utterly hardened at that time ; but that I still recollected that I called

her father and husband my friends; that her character and affections were the dearest treasures of both; nor did I wholly forget the sacred name of *mother*!

Augusta now regarded me as a relation, and the mutual friend of herself and husband; and I perceived that she took pleasure in my company and conversation, and that her attention to me daily increased, and not the less rapidly for its being wholly without a tincture of guilt, of course void of concealment.

For my part I combated my rekindled passion with less success, because I really believed in time I could subdue it, and yet indulge in the sight of its object. But my character began now to be subject to excessive variations; reflection could not be entirely banished from my brain, and my spirits were seized with the deepest melancholy.

Every thing conspired to strengthen my passion ; there was, I thought, no safety for myself but in flight ; and such was the effeminacy of my mind from long indulgence, I had not the fortitude to deny myself the intoxicating pleasure of beholding and conversing with that perfection of nature, I almost might be said to live at her house, and often did I surprise myself on the very brink of making a declaration to her of my love, when the same look that inflamed my wishes, as instantaneously imposed silence on my tongue.

While I continued in this dangerous situation, Osmond gave me proofs of the most sincere and affectionate regard ; and he ought to have deterred me from that which I could no longer conceal from myself, was growing into a serious and settled project, to seduce his amiable wife.

Amongst the herd of sycophants who administered to my pleasure, by calling themselves my friends, I possessed the regard of *one* man, who was really *entitled* to the appellation in its full extent. Sir Frederic Fairfax, though a young man of large independent fortune, was a man of that inestimable goodness, which is never changed by the scenes of an active life, or the nearest commerce with the world. Accidentally calling on me, while I was overwhelmed with an excess of melancholy, he said, with evident surprise, “ Dear Delaval, what is the cause of the evident depression of spirits in which I have for some time since observed you plunged ? ”

I was silent.

“ Nay, my dear friend, I know you are not given to the vapours, like a woman ! Come, come ; let me see what passes in your heart. ”

The load I had borne for many months was grown intolerable; and I had, in fact, resolved either to escape by flying from the presence of my too charming relation for ever, or to change my burden, in committing a new and more inexcusable crime, in possessing the person of Osmond's wife. In this state, it was impossible for me to resist the instance of so excellent a man as Fairfax pressing for my confidence. I was the more ready to speak, because the balance in my mind had been for many days really inclined to the side of virtue, and the feelings of my mind I knew would favour that tendency. I therefore ingenuously recounted my situation, and confessed that the peace of my mind, and perhaps all the honour that had still remained lurking in my character, had fled before a secret passion entertained for the wife of the worthy Osmond—the wife of my friend.

“The wife of Osmond!” he exclaimed, after listening with evident impatience: “Are you not one of the friends in whom he most confides, the near relation of his wife? The world thinks so, and you have yourself greatly misled me, if it is not so. And Osmond is said to be beloved by his wife: she is almost adored by those who are happily of her acquaintance, as the most admirable of her sex; and her husband is the fondest and most indulgent of men.” I eagerly cried — “I know;— I know.” “Hold,” replied Sir Frederic, “I have not yet done! The woman you have profaned with your thoughts is the mother of an infant family! My lord, my lord, can you attempt such ties? Ah, I know my friend will drive from him such horrid thoughts.—There are bounds to folly even among libertines; and this, this is a crime, and of so deep a stain, a life

of penitence could not wash it away ; and neither a life of penitence, nor the wide ocean of dissipation, could stand between this crime and your happiness, which it would annihilate even to its very remembrance !” I trembled with horror at the picture he drew, which, by what had passed in my own bosom, I too well understood to be the faithful copy of that it would delineate.

After a pause, he resumed his conversation. “ Listen to me, my lord ! If you are too feeble to resist this fatal passion, and remain near its object, form a pretext no longer to visit Osmond : it is far better he thinks you capricious, than that he should have reason to know you depraved. It is often in flight that victory is gained in such a warfare. Break off all intercourse between the families, even abruptly, rather than expose such weakness as yours is to a

second trial.—No one yet suspects this weakness ? Consider, you are a husband, and a father.”

“ No living being has penetrated my secret. Mrs. Osmond is too virtuous to suspect it ; and yet *has been*—ah, let me conceal it from myself, that I know it—within my toils.”

“ Still, my lord, are you happy ! It is not too late to wash away this error, enormous though it is, as if it had never been. For God’s sake, look more nearly at the horrid effects of what you would have done, and then fly for ever ! You would reduce to the lowest misery two people now most happy, and part of whose happiness consists in your welfare : You would rob the children of their mother ; for she who has been a faithless wife, cannot be a good mother. You would plant an eternal dagger in your own heart, and bring disgrace on your

lovely offspring. Fly, fly from such a scene : It is but one effect of courage, one short anguish, to save you from millions of pangs ! Fail to be a man in this instance, and never will you pardon yourself.—Yield to a voluptuous temptation, and take the transient pleasure as your sole reward, for never will you know peace afterwards.”

The words of Sir Frederic appalled my spirits. I could not deliberately face such a scene as I was blindly rushing into when I descried my erring feet. If I was but too uniformly vicious in my habits, it was because I had never learned to distinguish true from false enjoyments ; never had discovered of what true felicity is formed. This real friend soon after took his leave, but not till he had received my solemn promise, that I would see Mrs. Osmond no more.

Sincerely did I meditate on the best

means of effecting this purpose. It is true there was a reluctance in my thoughts, when they turned, by the mere violence of my efforts, to the eternal adieu, I had, as I believed, bidden to the lovely Augusta: Frequently my firmness sunk under the conflict, and I said, "She may once more, *only once more*, be seen without guilt on my part, or misery to either." But again the words of my true friend hung on my ear, and I repeated involuntarily to myself—"never will you know peace afterwards."

In this struggle of my reason and passions, in this doubtful moment, abruptly entered one of the dashing companions of what I termed my pleasures.

"Good day, Delaval. By your thoughtful countenance, a stranger would certainly take you for a grave and plodding

man ! Are you really employed in thinking, my dear lord ?”

“ Yes, my dear fellow, and I beg to be left to the employment.”

“ Oh, if that is all, my lord, you know I never spoil sport, although it were that of *fishing for melancholy thoughts.*”

The raillery of Belford stung me to the soul. I called him back, as he was on the point of quitting the room, and pretended to laugh at his being so easily duped by my assumed gravity. My efforts to be gay really deceived my companion ; and he, in his turn, overflowed with the gaiety of animal spirits and a vacant mind. At length the image of the adored Augusta returned to my thoughts, but no longer with the resolves of leaving her.—Ah, no ! she was dearer

to my burning heart than ever; the conflict was over instantaneously, and as if by miracle, I determined to communicate to Belford the conversation that had lately made such a seemingly indelible impression on my judgment! The heart was untouched, the habits unmoved, and only a few moments were elapsed, and now I sought to find in the advice of Belford (which I faithfully anticipated), an excuse for my relapse.

I began by demanding of my new confidant an inviolable secrecy as to what I had to reveal to him.

He laughed aloud. "My dear Delaval, what a woeful face!"

"I have just had a long conversation with Sir Frederic Fairfax."

"And what has he said to make you forsake your character? for in truth you

are not the same. In those grave features, I cannot recognise the gay, the envied, Delaval ; but come, my lord, let us leave the sermon of Sir Frederic, if you please."

I told him of my passion for Osmond's wife.

"What, do you give your time to splanetic thoughts, and possess such a mistress ?"

"She is not my mistress."

"But she will be soon, depend on it." I repeated my conversation with Fairfax : I hinted, for I dared not do more, the impression it had made on me.

"Delaval, my dear fellow, is your head really turned ? Do you treat in a really serious tone, a pardonable intrigue, a

passing and venial folly? You are qualifying yourself for a knight-errant of the old times. Mrs. Osmond is the wife of your friend, the most virtuous of women—thinks only of her husband and children—tenderly loves her husband, who in his turn loves her no less. My dear fellow, what *novelty* of subject! Here is matter, *with your aid* for a new play, after which all London will run!”

“Belford, I wish you to be serious.”

“Well then, it shall be a *crying comedy*! will that do? There are materials for that, since you will have it so; but do not let the fearless Lord Delaval be turned from his purpose, by the amphibious Sir Frederic Fairfax, who is neither a man of the world, nor an anchorite! Fy, fy! Your lordship should not mould yourself by another! (at that moment the despicable Belford was

moulding me to his own mind.) “ You have played a brilliant part, and that your own, taken from no man’s prompting. I think that not many women have resisted you ; and now, when the finest moment of your life presents itself, you would turn poltroon, and run away from a grand career. Advance, advance, my dear lord ! Glory is in the path ! a declaration in form ; and I predict, it will not be ill received. It is a woman’s chief joy to please—and a lover differs so widely from a husband ! Osmond’s wife will affect at first the shield of prudence and duty ; but they are weak before vanity and the senses : it is so delightful to the sex to see their charms understood, the intoxication cannot be resisted. Leave this cold Welsh friend of yours to the ice of his own nature. You are the fascinating Delaval. If this private tale of your doubts were told in the public ear—oh, you would be the

object of pity to every society in London; and your new timidity would make an universal mourning! Courage, my lord, and return to the assault!"

I have repeated the two conversations of that day, to exhibit, on the one hand, the conduct of a man with a pure heart, who even in the midst of a corrupt society, preserves his genuine feelings; and, on the other, to expose the deformity of a character, which is that of thousands, who claim the respect of the world, and really think themselves honest men. Let not the followers of a gay and fashionable life deceive themselves: this is too faithful a picture of their hearts; and if they do not always speak in these plain terms, it is no less the language of their actions. If these pages did but open the eyes of *one* of my readers to the true nature of a dissipated world, then should I not repent me of

the pains I inflict on myself, -in the detailing the many errors and crimes of an unprofitable life.

Belford, the contemptible man of pleasure, gained the victory over my feeble and spoiled nature. The just and eloquent remonstrances of my true and inestimable friend were banished away from my memory, as entirely as new fallen snow is dissolved by succeeding rains. I ran headlong and with fury into the toils ; I desperately, I may say with a full consciousness of the event, bartered all my happiness (as Fairfax had predicted) for a short triumph, a fleeting joy.

The more I saw of Augusta after this, the more obstacles were multiplied in my attempt to seduce her. I could not disguise from myself her sincere love for her husband, her habitual regard

for all her duties. Her virtues were all devoid of ostentation; and, therefore, the more difficult to be assailed: her husband and her children occupied her chief thoughts. Of the nature of my regard she had no mistrust: she thought my former passion had subsided into friendship, and treated me as a near relation, and highly valued friend; and often, as I have since learnt, did she converse with her husband of my merits, not affecting to conceal her innocent regard for me. For the success of my criminal designs, I wished frequently she had been less generous; for the most depraved hearts feel compunction, when they commit some of the worst actions. In the autumn, Osmond and myself planned a party into the country with our families and friends. It will not be doubted, that his lovely wife was the object of this excursion, as far as I had been active in promoting it. Our party,

which was large, arrived at a seat of mine in Hampshire, the scene of our destination. The place, of course, was not new to me ; but I seemed to behold it with eyes that had never beheld it before. Gardens enamelled with the gayest flowers, orchards laden with fruit, woods whose foliage invited reverie, and luxurious fields teeming with rich and beauteous harvests, and the melody of birds uttering universal joy ; above all, the presence of Mrs. Osmond, filled my senses with such unutterable transport, as betrayed and entranced even the soul. Ah, what was my intoxication ! If I loved before, what were my sensations then ! Let him who is entangled with a passion, that reason and humanity forbid, let him shun such scenes : innocent in themselves to corrupt man, they form, in such a state of temptation, the magic that binds him to his basest crimes and deepest misery.

Each individual of our unthinking happy party, abandoned themselves to the delights of this to me entrancing scene. We walked frequently in the charming and extensive park, by which Nut Hill was surrounded. One day a fatal destiny (I cannot now otherwise name a chance that served my unworthy designs) separated Augusta and me from the gay unthinking throng, by whom we were generally surrounded: we were in one of the most enchanting spots of the plantations. The rural scene, that beautiful nature, which is so captivating to men, softened by a luxurious passion, disposed my mind more than ever I had before felt, to the indulgence of my burning passion. The first words that escaped Mrs. Osmond, were—"Why did we not bring the children here? This lovely place would be delightful for them to play in, and would make it still more attractive to us, who enjoy with

a parent's rapture their innocent gambols. My Osmond, too, how unfortunate he did not accompany us in our ramble ; but you are absent, my lord : is not this delightful spot a favourite walk of yours ? It is a place to engender dreams of happiness."

" Yes, my fair cousin ! Here sensibility takes the reins, the world is no longer thought of ! Here we dream indeed !— Here friendship is love ;—or," casting on her bewitching face a glance that darted from the depth of my labouring soul, "*at least resembles love !*"

" It is true," she replied, in the most innocent manner possible. " I really believe, if we lived always in a spot like this, I should love Mr. Osmond even better than I do."

As she said this, her lovely eyes were

more illumined than usual, and were informed with such exquisite softness ! Her beauty, heightened by the tender thoughts that passed through her mind, was more interesting than I had ever beheld it : I sighed profoundly, and scarcely knowing that a sigh escaped me.

“Are you not well, Lord Delaval ? You seem disturbed.”

“In spite of fate, my dear Augusta, I yield to—I—ah—I envy the happiness of my friend !—of Osmond ! How you make me feel the difference between my wife and you ! If Lady Delaval resembled you—” I fixed my eye on her with still more expression—“I should be the happiest of men ! But where is woman that can be compared with you ? Fortunate and happy Osmond ! Happy, *since you love him.*”

My eyes, my countenance, spoke more than my words.

“ Since we married,” said Augusta, with the sweetest simplicity, “ we have lived for each other.—Ah, no ! I wrong my *babes*—we live for them too.”

“ These sentiments, my dear cousin, do not exclude friendship ? Or if they do, you have said too much for my peace.”

“ You take my words too literally.” She still spoke with the same conscious purity. “ For example, my family, the friends of my husband, are mine.”

“ May I hope, (why does not her eye meet mine ? was my internal exclamation), may I hope the flattering, the precious distinction is mine ? ”

“ I do not know, my lord, what are your doubts. How long have you hesitated to believe that Osmond and myself love you as our friend and relation.”

“ The cold name of friend, Augusta, from *you*, is—”

I could not proceed, I threw myself at her feet, as I passionately whispered, “ Why may I not still aspire to the name of lover ?”

“ What, my lord, have you permitted yourself to say ? Is it possible !—Nay, Lord Delaval, give me leave this moment to quit you !”

“ Ah, most adored of women ! Pardon—” I stammered, but would have detained her.

“ No, my lord, I have already heard

too much—It is enough to say we never meet again.”

Mrs. Osmond fled from me ; I pursued, and throwing myself at her feet, exclaimed—“ One moment, Madam—only one moment ! Listen to me once more ! Forgive an error, that from my sad malady, may be termed madness, and which I pledge my honour to subdue ! Oh, do not bereave me of the name of friend ! Pity my weakness, while you condemn my fault ! I will do all you wish to merit your pardon : Cast me not from the heaven of your mercy : Forget, and never let Osmond, my injured friend, never let human being know my indiscretion ! And oh, if you can hide it from yourself, I would punish it here before your eyes, with the sacrifice of my life, if I did not fear to injure your unsullied name, if I did not know your angelic goodness :

and before you condemn me to distraction, remember that my claims to your heart *were prior* to that of any human being, since they were founded almost in infancy."

Augusta, a little recovered from the emotions my conduct had excited, condescended to reason with me on my strange forgetfulness of what was due to her, to her husband, and myself. She pictured with the force of that sweet simplicity which is the genuine effect of a virtuous mind, the esteem, the love, the *entire* confidence Osmond had always displayed in all his intercourse with me, notwithstanding no circumstance of our *former attachment* had been withheld from his knowledge—the hateful crime I had committed to him I called my friend—the indignity I had offered to herself. I was, for the moment, won by the charms of her natural

eloquence, of her pure and exquisite feelings. I renewed, in the most solemn manner, my protestations never again to offend in thought; I swore to subdue my unpardonable passion.

“ To be permitted,” I said, “ to *remain* your friend, and that of your husband, will content my better thoughts, and shall encourage me to tear from my heart all inclinations unworthy of your sanction.”

I appeared to my victim so penetrated with a sense of my fault, so resolute to recover her good opinion (and such was indeed my resolution,) that she sincerely pardoned my offence, reminding me, however, of my solemn engagements. Fatal error!—Never let a woman believe the protestations of my sex, after such an instance of his depravity: his sincerity is no pledge for the future ;

his very repentance has all the weakness, though none of the guilt of his first crime.

The last dinner-bell now summoned us to the house, and when we rejoined the rest of our thoughtless party, we were rallied for our long absence; Osmond himself, in the integrity of his soul, being the first to laugh at our expence. I easily conjectured what passed in the mind of his wife, and for myself, I scarcely knew how to conceal my embarrassment.

Our party soon after dispersing, and a fresh succession of visitors arriving at Nut Hill, it was some time before I had leisure to review my recent conduct, and thence revert back to the multiplied mistakes of my life. For some time the past haunted and tortured me incessantly.

How truly did I hate that past! What would I not have given to have been able to recal it! I felt that I was lost, and struggled ineffectually against that stream which time and habit swells, till it sweep away all that is worthy, with its impetuous waves. The checks that occasionally stop the current, do but add to its violence. How much had I experienced this truth! I sat as one that sees inevitable ruin encompassing him; and though he comprehends its nature, is unable to fly from it, or resist.

It is true, I had not only promised to banish Mrs. Osmond from my thoughts, but most sincerely had promised. There were moments, and those not seldom, when I formed the only wise purpose in my situation—that of never more, if in my power, beholding Osmond or his family; and no doubt, I should have

been countenanced by his wife in so honourable a proceeding: but those moments fled too rapidly, and were succeeded by others in which the image of Augusta returned with more imperious sway than ever.

The winter came, and on our return to London, I returned to my former character, and was again among the most distinguished, in whatever circle was most dissipated. Still Mrs. Osmond was the object of all my meditations, which made all other engagements tasteless to me. Soon after Christmas Osmond was obliged to attend his parliamentary duties, and he found me in a state of mind, shunning merely one actual crime, when the whole heart was hourly embued with new depravity: it was not such as I could long endure, and I gradually returned

to my habit of visiting Mrs. Osmond : her manners proved that she had really pardoned me : her behaviour in all things was distinguished not only by its simplicity, but its elevation above all that is common. On my part not an action betrayed the violent tumults of my soul ; for need I repeat, that I loved with more transport than before ;—that her danger was increased by all that had passed, by her present security. It is true looks sometimes escaped me, that might have informed how far I was from keeping my promise, could her own generous nature have harboured suspicion.

One morning that I called in Park-street, I found her alone, and after some interesting conversation on my part, she addressed me in the sweetest manner, to the following effect :

“ I hope, my lord, you have no reason to be dissatisfied with my conduct to you” (her suspicions ran the wrong way): “ you have proved to me, that I was right in regarding the peace of my husband’s mind, in the pardon I sincerely accorded you, and to which your conduct since has so justly entitled you.”

“ What more do you require, my dear friend? I live but to obey your slightest wishes.”

“ Nothing more than the continuance of the same line of behaviour.”

“ Ah, too lovely woman,” cried I, unable any longer to contain my transports, “ can I banish, think you, in *reality*, your image from a heart devoted to it from early youth, and which

nothing but the ambitious views of my parents, and my cursed folly, could ever have tempted me to resign my claims on ——” and I fell on my knees before her.

“ Rise, my lord, for the love of heaven —if Mr. Osmond should enter.”

There was no improper sentiment in my Augusta, while she made this exclamation, other than her too great dread of disturbing her husband’s repose of mind, by the knowledge of my criminal passion: yet I saw my advantage even in that, and rose not without secret exultation.

“ Henceforth, dearest Augusta, no word, no look, shall ever tell you the agony of my soul! I love you, adore you more than ever; but it is for the

last time you shall hear that from my lips : I will suffer in silence, too fortunate to sacrifice my life to the preservation of your happiness."

" My lord, can you disguise from yourself, that you have broke your word in the first instance ?"

" If my discretion knows its bounds, if I am hereafter silent, what more could you require ?—That I should not love you ? Ah, never ; never can that be ! I am willing to suffer, rather than wound your peace : grant me your pity at least."

At that moment a noise was heard, the door opened, and some visitors were announced.

I was not in a situation of mind to endure the presence of company ; and having returned home, I fell insensibly into a train of reflection ; but little did reflection benefit me now. My passion for my lovely cousin was no longer an enemy, with whom I contended, but a guest I entertained with infinite delight : I did not, I could not, conceal it from myself, that I now deliberately contemplated the seduction of Augusta, and gorged my appetite with the promised repast : the last conversation I held with her, had decided the tone of my feelings ; I had avowed the secret indulgence I gave to my passion, and I knew too well what the human heart is composed of, not to know that Augusta had passed over the boundary of her own safety, when she permitted the intimations of that conversation,

without an immediate and final separation. Did she yet love me, then, was a natural question.

I could not tell, but too perfectly I saw I might repeat the offence. In a word, I abandoned myself wholly to the study of arts, and the improvement of accidents, to hasten the downfall of this victim: all other considerations were desparately thrown aside. I could dine at the house of the happy Osmond; I could behold him with the cruel indifference of a murderer, while he enjoyed his present felicity, because ignorant of the future: nor did my guilty soul feel one pang for the heart-rending affliction I had destined for him. I could view the hitherto spotless Augusta, caressing her beauteous infants, without a sigh for the reverse to which I was leading her.—I even began

in fancy to enjoy the triumph, as well as the pleasure of my achievement : so speedily does the heart corrupt ! How inconceivably rapid are the ravages of vice !

I called one morning on Osmond, after having passed a night in which my beating pulse could tell the tumult of my thoughts ; but my ideas were no longer vague : I had reduced them too fatally to a system, and the exultation of my heart too fiercely beamed in my eyes to be unnoticed by any one accustomed to speculations on men ; but my victims had all the simplicity that suited my purpose, and was necessary to the desolation which enclosed them and their helpless infants.

I found Osmond with his children playing around him, his lovely wife was

from home, and the anxious impatient husband seized this occasion, impatient to communicate to me some little anxiety he had recently entertained concerning Augusta's health and spirits.

“My wife,” he said, “appears to have some cause of trouble she conceals from me, and to which I have no clue: she has indeed been involved in a dispute of a pecuniary concern with a distant relation; but the uneasiness she too evidently dissembles, could never be occasioned by that, since she has always been really too indifferent to any superfluity of fortune; and as she knows mine is ample, could have no reluctance to open her mind on that subject to one she well knows would gratify her slightest wish. What can I conjecture? To me her silence is the more astonishing, because she has never, since our

happy marriage, been accustomed to hide any of her thoughts from me. Whatever the cause of her grief, why not divide it with her affectionate husband. Certainly, my dear lord, she is a wife of whom I am worthy only by my love and devotion to her interest, and that of our darling children ; but my affection is such as to give me all the rights of a lover with the claims of her husband !”

What will my readers say ? Will they perceive, that I instantaneously saw, that the beloved wife of this worthy man was smitten, and that *I*, and not *he*, was therefore to be deemed the *successful happy* lover.

I hastened from this unfortunate man (after some slight excuses for his wife) to bury in solitude the agitation of my soul ! and now another opportunity

presented itself, to tread back the cruel path in which I was wading to a scene replete with horrors. Some faint, very faint wishes that I could return, did feebly assail me. Alas! those wishes were nothing, unless some accidental arrow of affliction had previously struck deep into my heart, to render it susceptible of a fruitless repentance! There is the true misery of a debauched life and manners: nothing that is *not personal* to the dissipated man can touch his heart.

After many hours of solitude, in which I chiefly ruminated on the means of subduing the remnant of Augusta's virtue (for I could not forget the impression I had made, and my success in that, on which perhaps all ultimate success depends) I felt myself in a diabolical manner, enveloped and carried away by the whirlwind of my desires, which from

that instant I resolved to obey, at the price of the peace of the world, if it must be so.

Something prevented my calling in Park-street the following day ; and when I saw Osmond again, he informed me his wife had begged his permission to go with her children to the country for a few weeks, as his duty in the house prevented his accompanying her: he at first remonstrated against her determination, but her entreaties were so urgent, and her happiness, even her health, seemed so greatly to depend on his compliance, that he had yielded ; and she had actually left town that morning. Osmond was astonished, as well as grieved, at this unexpected departure, for he had not been able to discover, or even surmise the cause of Augusta's melancholy: she had left

him, however, with assurances of unalterable affection, and had taken with her the smiling pledges of it.

“ My friend,” he said, pressing my hand with emotion, “ my wife bears in her gentle bosom some secret affliction : it is not our law-suit.—Oh no, it is something more tender that could touch her soul with such deep concern ! My ideas wander, I know not to what point. Ah, my dear friend, I feel that my Augusta is necessary to my happiness : dearly must I love her, since I, who could never bear her absence for a day since she became mine, have consented to this separation, to heal the wound I cannot probe ! Now I know a man may love another object better than himself, for I have permitted my wife, for the sake of her peace, to leave me to the tortures of my own mind : she

is gone but for a few weeks, yet will they appear years to me."

Every word uttered by this most injured of men, shot living fire through my veins: two absolutely opposite passions seemed at one and the same time, to ravage with equal force my burning heart—pity for Osmond, pity for his devoted wife, suddenly flamed within me, and nearly broke out to the betraying of my guilty secret.

"Is it," I said mentally, withdrawing to a window, to conceal my too violent emotion: "is it to destroy the celestial bliss of such a couple, that I sit here contriving the means of their destruction? How do I learn to support the glance of my friend's eye, the sallies of his unsuspecting heart? Oh, is there depravity for that in the human heart? Is

it possible to abuse such excess of goodness?" I was nearly overpowered by my remorse: I who hardly ever had known what it was to feel for another. Osmond perceived my agitation, but avoided to disturb me further, than by taking my hand, little thinking how far otherwise he was concerned in it than he imagined.

What is to be said after this, when I add that my heart was as obdurate as ever; and that my criminal passion was but the more rooted, for this and every preceding contest? The sudden sentiments of remorse all died away as they were born, however lively their appearance; while my love for Augusta secretly, incessantly shot forth new roots to spread among, and entangle with the fibres of my soul,

Although my thoughts had taken a decided part, I was still at a loss what course of action to pursue: Mrs. Osmond I could no longer daily behold ; but I felt as if I had gained immensely in my pursuit, by the knowledge of what her unfortunate husband had communicated to me ; and the ardour of my hopes, and I may say, certainty of my success, made my passion more than ever dangerous to its object, by the patience they infused into all my projects.

Still I could not rest, and therefore, again the pleasures of the world were called upon to lull my turbulent wishes. At this period Sir Frederic Fairfax returned to town, from his seat in North Wales : his counsels, had I followed them as I had formerly sworn to do, would have spared me the miseries he but too well foresaw.

It was his custom to watch the fluctuation of my temper, ever hoping to find some moment more fortunate than the rest, for his benign purposes: he easily perceived that my mind was not occupied upon the trifles that surrounded us.

“What, my dear lord,” he said, “now agitates you? No new distempered inclination, I hope. Some inscrutable sentiment I cannot define, attaches me to your interest.”

“Ah, no, Fairfax, the old one is too incurable.”

“Let me not, Delaval, blush for my friend.”

Why should I trace this explanation? I confessed myself faithfully to Sir Frederic: there was that in his manner which always insured confidence; and

not the least circumstance of what had passed since we had before conversed on the subject, was hid from him : I forbore only to betray my desperate resolutions, to conquer not myself, but Mrs. Osmond, whatever it cost my peace, that of her husband, or the lovely Augusta herself.

“ Delaval,” said Sir Frederic, in reply to the confession I had made, “ you have neglected the advice of the truest friendship. Let me reproach you as becomes both yourself and me. When you first confided this malady to me, how easy was it then to find the cure ! Distrust of your patient fortitude, pointed out a way that required but one effort : had you then fled from the society of the Osmonds, the conquest would have been yours, and your heart recompensed by its serenity. True virtue is capable of courage, exists not

without it; but one act of courage makes all that follows it an easy victory.

“What shall we say now? It is too late to retrieve the past? I will not disguise the difficulty: at first a man of more constancy of temper than yourself, might have subdued a like criminal passion, and remained the friend of the object, remained to enjoy and rejoice in her virtues; but no man, after giving place and strength to those accessary errors you have so assiduously encouraged, could remain, and not fall their victim. *Now* there is but one word—*fly*—and from this instant, or you will sink below the basest of men, below the most guilty—let me conceal nothing---below the guiltiest will you fall;--and with you the wretched wife

of your friend ! You have dragged her down too far already !”

This second admonition of a real and intelligent friend, carried conviction in its reasoning, and something persuasive in its manner, although mingled with such heavy reproach. The turbulent flood of my passions ceased to flow, as if arrested by some irresistible power : my heart once more felt that it could beat with other and better movements than those of licentious wishes. I felt the sentiment of virtue, while my lips uttered, “ you have saved me from what I shudder to look at : yes, I will place an insurmountable barrier between my temptation and my weakness. Augusta I will never more behold.”

This worthy friend congratulated me

upon my present happy disposition ; but besought me to reconsider the subject no more, but under some pretext for the abruptness of the proceeding to my family, remove into the country for a few months, till I could behold the object of my tenderness with indifference.

Ah, what is man when he trusts to his temporary resolutions, laying no solid foundation for his wiser thoughts to rest upon ! In this very moment, when I thought truth alone, in all brightness reigned over my soul, I imposed on Fairfax—I imposed on myself ! I was too feeble to stand alone—my friend was the support of all my best thoughts, in-somuch that when he had been absent only a few days from me, they were faded till I could scarcely trace them in my changeable affections : so hourly and in so dastardly a manner did I relapse,

that I wilfully sought for consolation in the company of the sycophant Belford.

But why should I relate the story of my complete return to my usual dissolute course, and my fatal machinations against the peace of an unfortunate family? It is the repetition of what I have before related, one thing only will I remark: most dangerous is it to delay the execution of a good purpose. Had I come to a species of explanation with Osmond (which I might have done without injury to his wife's honour,) although the world might have tempted me back to some of its follies, I should have escaped the bitterest of all the pangs of remorse for life.

I now visited my deluded friend as formerly: he gently reproached me for my absence, when he so much needed my

advice, "the health of my Augusta," he said, "declines daily, I am informed. I have urged her, besought her, in every letter, to return to London. She constantly replies that she is preparing for her journey; yet still finds some excuse for remaining at Harefield——My conjectures——what shall I say? My suspicions, run to absolute frenzy. Can I have lost her affections? Yet how? I that never offended her, in word or thought, since her worthy father consigned her to my protection; how could I lose her affections, who was all purity? I find she sinks beneath some heavy load of sorrow. Ah, if it be possible, my lord, throw some light upon my dark thoughts."

Had Osmond cast a single look upon me as he spoke these words, he would have seen all the confusion of my mind, and perhaps have dived into the true

cause of his and his Augusta's misery : but his question was shot at random, and he was in truth occupied with his own conjectures, when he spoke. I nevertheless had infinite difficulty to contain myself, and stammered out a multitude of incoherent words foreign even to the subject.

Mean time the state of my virtuous mind, as described by her abused husband, too naturally fanned my hopes. What will not be expected from a man of my description ? Can it be surprising that I formed the resolution to surprise Mrs. Osmond in her retirement ?

The project was no sooner planned than executed. I feigned the necessity of a journey in another direction : followed by a domestic, in whose fidelity to my pleasures I could confide, I reach-

ed a small inn in the neighbourhood of Mrs. Osmond's seat; I instructed my agent in his part of the enterprise, and from him I soon learned, that my soul's enchantress was accustomed to walk with her children in a retired spot of the park, belonging to the house. At the hour I was informed she usually walked, I approached the place: my soul at that moment was in my eyes; I drew near: she was surrounded by her lovely infants: she uttered a faint shriek, at perceiving me; but attempting to recover herself, she said, "Lord Delaval, what can have brought you here?"

"My extreme impatience, my dear cousin, to learn from yourself the state of your health: Osmond's account is too alarming; for mercy's sake, deny it, at least in words."

“ No, my lord, I cannot ; you see how I am ! ”

And I did see that she looked as if risen from the grave.

“ A speedy death awaits for my deliverance. Alas ! these infants and their poor father have attached me yet a little to life ! How will he, unfortunate man, support my sad fate ! ”

“ You weep, loveliest of women ! ”

“ Ah, my lord, what culpable indiscretion brings you to this place ? And what is it you ask of me ? Is it not enough in your eyes to have betrayed friendship, insulted humanity, as you have done ? What have you now to say to me ? Retire, my lord ! We must never see each other more ! ”

“ And, Augusta, what is my crime? Have I not preserved silence when my heart was torn with sufferings? Have I not sacrificed all to my reverence for you? Nothing remains but for me to die a martyr to your injunctions:—do you ordain that? Speak, and you shall be obeyed.”

“ Oh, Lord Delaval,” she replied, preparing to depart, “ I can hold no longer parley with you.”

I seized her hand, and forcibly detaining her, I said rapidly and vehemently—“ Here I swear to you eternal love! I dedicate to you this heart, while it continues to beat! All extremities will I endure, but cannot cease to cherish your image in my soul.”

“ Is it thus, Lord Delaval, you keep your faith with me ? ”

She disengaged her hand from mine, and was again retiring.

“ One word,” I cried, almost frantic.

“ Be gone from this place, my lord, I conjure you ! Let no one see you here : Conceal this rash act from the whole world, and be worthy of the opinion I once entertained of you.”

Mrs. Osmond was retiring : as she spoke these words, I advanced speedily towards her, and threw myself at her feet.

“ My lord,” she said, with looks of indignation, “ this insult proceeds too

far ;” and she took the path leading to the house.—I saw one of the nurses at a distance ; and it being impossible to detain Augusta longer, without injury to her reputation, and destruction to my own hopes, I turned my back, and fled from a spot that was at that instant odious to me, from the ill success of my project.

For some hours death seemed to hover round me, and I bade him welcome from the inmost recesses of my heart. What was I to do ?—Augusta, I was well convinced, would not leave her house, till she knew I had quitted the neighbourhood ; and to visit her openly, would be to betray myself, and afford her new barriers against my criminal design, which I did not, could not, any longer disavow to myself.

After spending two days in the neighbourhood of Harefield, amidst all the horrors of impatient passion, and the most perplexing fears of the strength and firmness of Augusta's character and principles, I returned to London, where I balanced the hopes of my success; for now I resolved to go on at the price of all that my project could cost. She had listened to me *more than once*, and even enjoined me silence: not that she deliberately approved my passion; not that she had condescended to the arts of a coquette, but that a mistaken regard for her husband's peace, a lurking sentiment of esteem for me, and a sincere wish for my happiness, had imposed this course upon her. On this I built with confidence, and in the end said to myself, "Augusta is lost to herself; Augusta is mine."

After more than a week had elapsed, I called one day on Osmond ; and what was my astonishment, to find that his wife was returned.

“ She is no longer, my dear Delaval,” he said, “ the same person : her health is shaken ; but that which is even more terrible to me, is, that I know her health is thus impaired by some secret grief. What that is I cannot discover : she evades all my enquiries, all my closer watchings : it is too plain I have lost her confidence ! I know not how I have deserved such an affliction. My dear lord, your friendship is my only consolation ; to you only can I confide my sorrow.”

Ah, what were my feelings when Osmond, the deceived, betrayed Osmond, addressed me in those words !

But soon my guilty thoughts took another channel, and I exulted in my approaching victory. Augusta loves me—the truth is no longer to be concealed. Such was the concealed language of my beating heart !

Will my reader condemn me for a culpable complacency in dwelling on scenes which ought to be the subject of the deepest remorse ? Let him know that it is for him I write, for him I torture myself with this relation : this is my only expectation.—Oh, man ! whoever thou art, if thou dost tread the flowery paths of pleasure, behold the abyss to which they led me.

My intimacy with her husband gave me an excuse again to visit Mrs. Osmond in the bosom of her family : but it was plain that she shunned me, and

that with the most scrupulous circumspection, she avoided all occasion of our being a moment alone together. Still I could sometimes catch her eye involuntarily wandering towards mine ; and most frequently hear a sigh that escaped her, though evidently against her struggles to suppress it.

The deluded husband, meanwhile, never ceased to introduce in our private conversations the subject of his wife's dejection ; and one day, no longer master of himself, he took my hand and said, "you may yet save me from despair, my lord : Augusta holds you in *the highest estimation*. Endeavour to discover her secret sorrow : you will have more address than a fond husband, that knows not how to command himself : but you are silent ! Will you not do this for the sake of our dear connection ?"

This language filled my mind with conflicting passions. I felt a horror even to trembling as Osmond besought me to search into the cause of his wife's malady ; yet, half repentant as I was while he spoke, I could not shut out the temptation offered to my long cherished hopes, in private conversations and a private intercourse with Augusta, not only sanctioned, but contrived by her husband—what opportunities of urging my suit ! Augusta *was now delivered* into my hands.

Such were my secret exclamations, and Osmond supposing I meditated a refusal of his request, retraced the fatal story as far as he could dive into it ; and concluded by again, in terms that ought to have softened my obdurate heart to do far otherwise than he blindly wished, entreating me to speak the first oppor-

tunity to his wife : and by what name did he conjure me to do this act, which he considered as the only medium of his salvation from despair ? by the name—I tremble as I repeat it—by *the sacred name of friend ? as well as relative !*

I affected a reluctance to interfere in so delicate a matter, but I resisted so faintly, that he took my hand, saying, “ I see you will yield this point to your friend’s solicitations, although the task is, I allow, indeed, a painful one.”

Shortly after Mrs. Osmond, pale as the lily bending under the storm, entered the room, and her husband soon found a pretence to leave us alone. I began my commission, but with a voice scarcely intelligible, to beseech Augusta to reveal to me the secret cause of that melancholy, which

appeared but too surely to undermine her health, and would, if not speedily subdued, bring her to an early grave. I spoke with such seeming pity that any stranger would have supposed I was moved only by her sufferings, and with such a semblance of sincerity, that the most practised hypocrite could not have suspected I already knew the cause.

“ Is it for your lordship,” she replied, while a deep sigh escaped her bosom, “ to question me on this subject? My husband is *too imprudent—you forget—and I*”—(another sigh escaped her) “ I *ought* to conceal for myself.”

She broke off abruptly, and hastily left the room. Osmond soon entered, and eagerly enquired into the result of my conversation with his wife; and I confined myself to the declaration that

she obstinately persisted in silence, as to the cause of her unhappiness.

Some time passed, and I saw Augusta only in the company of her husband, and even rarely did she permit me so to see her. It was evident she struggled to gain a victory over herself; but, alas! she was beset on every side! If she fled from her husband to avoid me, I would follow her. If she remained, her husband blindly betrayed her to my snares. I only, no other on earth, could save her! and had I been so generous—what do I say?—so poorly honest, what sweet and indescribable blessings had I purchased by that one act—what misery had I shunned!

One day she said to me in a hurrying manner, “I ought to dictate to my heart—I ought to fly—I would wish to

return to the country. Ah, my lord, promise me, if I do, you will never approach that spot which I shall select."

I would have answered, but she was in an instant departed from the room.

Why should I continue the minute relation of similar circumstances? I have already done enough; I have developed the incidents of this sad story, to shew that even a virtuous woman runs precipitately to her destruction, if she unhappily takes the first wrong step. Mrs. Osmond was the victim of a weak complacency to me, when her bosom was still free from any criminal partiality: we were, indeed, both culpable; and though I basely sacrificed an amiable woman to my illusory gratifications, yet she was at first mistress of her own fate, and ought to have known that

such persons as I soon betrayed myself to be, are not to be parleyed with by a virtuous woman. I do not excuse myself—I despise at this moment my selfishness, my cowardice; but I cannot too often repeat that I write to make what reparation is in my power; and not to be contemned will be the reparation, if one woman, in the glass of Augusta's fortunes, perceives her own error in time to go back from the precipice of guilt, shame, and misery.

Mrs. Osmond fell by gradations into excess of guilt: she could not resist all the various artifices of my experienced profligacy: her tenderness for her husband declined—she lost sight of all her duties, her endearing obligations, even her maternal character was injured by her fatal errors.

But short was her wandering : scarcely had I attained the whole of my wishes than she instantaneously felt all the horrors of her situation.

“ Begone, Delaval !” she cried, while remorse and indignation contended in her bosom for superiority. “ Ah what am I now !”

I would have appeased her anger ; it was in vain to speak. She regarded me with looks of such despair as terrified me. “ Have I sacrificed twenty-five years of virtue !—Oh, God, is it possible ? My children, dear children of a once beloved husband ; how shall *I ever again embrace you*—am I longer worthy to be *termed a mother ?*”

She shed a flood of tears, which a little relieved her from feelings that

otherwise I believe would have turned to absolute frenzy.

In a short time, she exclaimed, "Ah, my lord, have pity on me, and end my existence! Shew mercy in this, and strike to my heart! I cannot survive this day. I cannot again look on my good, my injured husband.—Delaval!" she uttered these words with a return of that wildness of manner with which she first spoke—"Can *you* wish me again to see *my husband*, and *your friend*? Ah! profligate man, would nothing less than so great a ruin satisfy your cruelty? But oh, my God! let me not deal falsely with my soul! I—I— have sinned the most?"

Again her lovely face was bedewed with tears; at which my heart, hard as it was, secretly rejoiced. I waited

for a moment, when I hoped to calm her raging mind ; but my presence did but increase the storm of her grief : it was in vain that I attempted to excuse myself and her by the fallacious arguments of the world, who consider adultery as a crime so easily pardoned, that the women who have publicly forfeited all claims to reputation, are received in society, and as much visited as the most respectable part of the sex.

All my attempts to lessen the sense of guilt, by urging the ensnaring circumstances by which we were betrayed, instead of soothing my remonstrances, inflamed her anguish ; and I was at length compelled to leave her to the uncertain issue of her despair.

On my quitting her, I was not wholly free from the canker-worm of remorse :

I had not only seduced the wife of my friend, but that at the very time when he gave me the truest proofs of his unbounded confidence and esteem; and what a change had I wrought in a virtuous and happy woman! Which had I most injured—which had I reduced to the most deplorable situation—the husband, or the wife?

Bold as I was in wickedness, I could not assume courage to rap at the door of the injured husband, in order to enquire into the state of Mrs. Osmond's health and spirits. Though I most ardently longed to be again admitted to her presence, I sought her in vain in those circles where we used to meet; and to the repeated invitations I caused my wife and mother to send the family, they received constant excuses. I endeavoured to impose a restraint on my

remorse : it was a vulture that gnawed into my heart. Every day I said, “ I will call in Grosvenor-street ;” but in vain—I could not bend my steps beyond the corner of Bond-street : such a coward does conscience make of the most hardened profligate !

One morning as I was sauntering down St. James’s-street, in company with two of the officers on guard, a sight more terrible than the most frightful of phantoms struck my eyes : Osmond hastened to me : his manner outran his speech, to declare he knew the fatal secret.

“ Traitor, villain,” he exclaimed, when he found utterance ! Then turning to my companions, he added, “ I follow this monster, that he may finish the career of his crime ! Read,” he

cried fiercely, and, at the same time, thrusting a letter into my hands.

The gentlemen who were with me forced us both into the Cocoa-Tree, when I read the following heart-rending address to the most injured and unfortunate husbands :

LETTER.

“ FAIN would I prepare your mind for a calamity of the most dreadful nature. Ah, can you not suppose—but let me not trifle with you : Osmond, I know you well : you have a heart to break with anguish, but suspense will not soften the blow.—Osmond, *I am dishonoured !*—I have *dishonoured* you !—I have broken the vow I made to you !—I have forgotten you, my dear father, and my unfortunate children !

For you are now to learn that Delaval, abusing your confidence, has received the price of his seduction in the arms of your wife!—I have nothing left but to die. Oh, spare me the agony of again looking on your face!—If remorse could wipe away shame, then would that be done; but, oh no! it cannot be!—Yet, reject not, I intreat of you, by *our past happiness*—repulse not my last sigh!—*Oh, pity me!*—Not that I would excuse myself even to my heart, sinking as it is with unknown terrors: it is not a false friend who has ruined your peace, Osmond, but a faithless, ungrateful wife: but still would I have *your* pity!—for the mother of your children, beloved children! Ah, I must never more behold my babes, never again press them in my polluted arms; never behold their innocent smiles of affection, at sight of their guilty

mother.—Dear babes, they too must suffer for my guilt! They must lose a parent, who once was qualified to guide their steps in this unhappy world! But I beseech you, too unfortunate father, to conceal from them, if possible, the cause of my death:—*for ever* hide from them the dreadful secret!

“Receive my last farewell!—Farewell, I dare not add the title once so dear to my lips!—

“Grant me one favour more:—never enquire to what place I have retreated. Oh, spare me the anguish of blushing in your presence! Let me perish unseen by all but my own conscience!

“Once again farewell! I do not ask you to cherish my memory with any remains of tender recollection!—But

oh, do pity me ! You will not, too generous Osmond, refuse me that ?”

I could not take my eyes from the letter when I had even read it through : the injured man I once had called my friend, but to destroy him, advanced to me and said—“ Have you sufficiently contemplated the picture of the destruction you have occasioned ?”

I was silent : my tongue would not perform its office.

“ Strike !” said the distracted Osmond, baring his breast. “ Here is the heart that loved you, that confided its dearest treasure to your friendship :—Strike ! it is the only mercy you have now to confer on me !”

Still was I silent.

“ Coward,” added Osmond, “ hast thou not a nerve to do me that kindness? There, draw thy sword, poltroon, in thy own defence !”

The officers who were the witnesses of this scene now interposed: they would have a little tempered his rage, at least so as to proceed with order. He rushed upon me; I retreated, and suffered my companions to stand between us. I had at last the forbearance (why was it not always so with my feelings?) to hear my name coupled with reproaches of the most humiliating kind, but which I had too well deserved, rather than commit a new crime. Pistols were now procured: my companions at length declared that my *honour* was compromised, and that I could no longer forbear to give Osmond the satisfaction he demanded; and at length

prevailed on us to adjourn to Chalk Farm, to adjust our difference.

Why did not these arbitrators on *honour*, rather tell me that mine was then forfeited, when I betrayed a *friend who confided in me*, and reduced to shame and misery his amiable and adored wife, the respectable mother of his infant family? But yielding to the fallacious reasoning of my associates, and for the sake of that word *honour*, I consented to withdraw to the appointed place, with our seconds: we met in half an hour;—we met—Osmond and I fought: most reluctantly, however, did I sully my hands with the blood of my injured friend. At the continual hazard of my own life, I forbore to push various advantages I gained, my entire care being employed in saving my enraged adversary, if that were possible; but he fired with such

impetuosity, his hand was so unnerved, that he fired without avail two shots: the second I made was but too effectual: he received a wound, and fell senseless on the grass. I flew to him, raised him in my arms, and with the aid of our mutual friends, put him in a carriage. I assisted to convey him to his own house, and after having seen collected about him the best medical assistance, I left him, at the intreaties of my friend, not knowing whether his wound was mortal or not; but too conscious that my presence would but add to his danger, when he should recover his senses and recollection.

Before I quitted the house of this ill-fated husband, I inquired of the house-keeper, who had been the nurse of the undone Augusta, respecting her unhappy mistress; and learned that she was un-

der the protection of a near relation of her father's, who at this period was on the continent with the army ; that this friend watched over my victim day and night, to prevent her committing suicide, which she had attempted ; and that she was besides so ill, that the physicians had little hope of her recovery. At that moment how did I envy her and her miserable husband, their near prospect of death !

Belford hastened, as did most of the young men of my acquaintance, with the cold politeness that insults misery, to console me upon this extraordinary event.

“ It was indeed,” they said, “ an unfortunate affair to be compelled to fight with so particular a friend ; but, my dear lord, the fault was not yours : Os-

mond would listen to no explanation, and *your honour* could no longer brook *his language.*”

“Do not mock me,” I cried, with rage in my looks—“do not mock me with such a word as that of *honour*; I ought to have died, rather than have met the man whom I had cruelly wronged, whom I had rendered frantic—I ought to have bared my bosom to him! I have added to all my guilt the only crime I could still commit—that of having killed the man I had so deeply injured—and have rendered his helpless infants orphans in the truest sense.” Sir Frederic Fairfax flew to me on the first rumour of the matter: with that humanity which had so assiduously laboured to preserve me from this train of calamities into which I was fallen, he now endeavoured to sooth my mind,

and release it from part, at least, of its intolerable anguish.

“ My lord,” he said, “ the past can never be recalled ; but to turn the past to its true use, is the task of a hero.”

Belford was with me at the moment the worthy Fairfax entered. “ How cruel,” interrupted he, “ to torment Lord Delaval with these unreasonable, and indeed unjust remonstrances ! What more has he done, than conduct himself like a man of *honour* ? Osmond, it is well known, provoked the encounter ; nor is Lord Delaval answerable for its unlucky issue.—Come, come :—the affair, it is true, has taken a turn a little serious : What then ? Is the elegant Delaval, therefore, lost to the world ? Heaven forbid ! My dear friend,” he continued, turning to me, “ Come back

among us: a party of us dine at the Cocoa Tree, and we will soon relieve your present melancholy: and as to you, Fairfax, I always recommended the *cloister*."

Lady Delaval now entered my dressing-room: on her way from the Park she had heard the events of the morning: and far from affecting even a tone consistent with the occasion, said, in a gay and sarcastic manner, "my lord, you see what it is to violate your conjugal vow! Ah, if I *were* unhappy enough to be a *fond jealous* wife, what mortification should I not have then to endure! But I do not pretend to lecture you on your duties;—only, in future, it would be well if less public effects were to follow your lordship's *private pleasures*: this advice comes from a *disinterested friend*, not from a fond

silly wife, as you know, Delaval, is the case with whatever advice I presume to offer to you."

When Fairfax and I were left alone, which soon happened, for my wife's visit was short, and Belford had performed the task of the moment, which was to laugh at my adventure before my face, and retire to laugh at it elsewhere, my intelligent and ever considerate friend attempted to pour some balm into my really tortured heart; at the same time, taking occasion to warn me against future relapses into vice: but there are times when all skill fails, and that was the case now.

According to the instructions I had given, I received hourly accounts of Osmond's situation, and in the morn-

ing was informed by Mr. H. whose surgical skill was, alas ! too certain, that the worst was to be expected from the state of his wound, and that I had best secrete myself till matters were arranged for my future safety : but whatever I felt from this information, how little was it to what ensued ! Osmond, the generous Osmond, a few hours after, deputed one of his most particular friends to request that I would instantly hasten to his presence.

Whatever were his motives, I resolved to obey the injured man : yet oh, what anguish did the effort---for such it was---what anguish did it cost me !

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

Allen





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